

Frustrated Japanese man on plane bites woman

TOKYO (AFP) — A frustrated Japanese man on a flight from Seoul to Tokyo bit a fellow passenger on the neck after a refusal to disembark. The man, who was on the flight for 11 hours, bit the neck of a woman sitting next to him. The woman was injured and required two weeks of treatment, police alleged. The man and his victim were not met before the incident.

Raquel Welch hounded out of Vienna ball

VIENNA (AFP) — A film star Raquel Welch was hounded out of a Vienna ball early Friday after being pelted with eggs and stones. Welch, 57, was seen leaving the ball in a limousine. She was being chased by a crowd of people. Welch was seen leaving the ball in a limousine. She was being chased by a crowd of people.

Valentine card costs hubby \$4.8 million

LONDON (AFP) — A Valentine's Day card that cost a husband \$4.8 million was sent to his wife. The card was a Valentine's Day card that cost a husband \$4.8 million was sent to his wife. The card was a Valentine's Day card that cost a husband \$4.8 million was sent to his wife.

Thousands of carnival towns invade German city halls

INN (AFP) — Thousands of carnival towns invaded German city halls on Thursday. The towns were invading German city halls on Thursday. The towns were invading German city halls on Thursday.

a rescued after not mimics for help

ODAR (AFP) — A man trapped under a collapsed roof was rescued after not mimicking for help. The man was trapped under a collapsed roof and was rescued after not mimicking for help.

King, Clinton confer on crisis

AMMAN (J.T.) — In a telephone conversation with U.S. President Bill Clinton on Tuesday, His Majesty King Hussein emphasised the need to pursue diplomatic efforts to defuse the crisis. King Hussein also valued efforts made by U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan, wishing him success in his endeavour to bring a peaceful solution to the crisis. President Clinton told the King that he hopes Iraq will comply with U.N. Security Council resolutions and implement them in letter and spirit to avoid military action.

U.N. withdrawing dozens more staff amid war fears

BAGHDAD (AFP) — The United Nations said Wednesday it would withdraw dozens more staff members in the next 24 hours amid fears of a possible U.S. military strike. "We are continuing to reduce the number of U.N. staff members along the lines of what we've been doing over the last couple of weeks," said Eric Falt, the spokesman for U.N. humanitarian activities here. "A group of 31 U.N. staff members will be leaving Baghdad tomorrow, including 29 by bus to Amman," he added. "It is simply a staff precaution measure." The United States has already withdrawn 60 U.N. personnel and some 20 family members since the start of the month, he added. Others have been sent from Baghdad to northern Kurdistan, which is not expected to be targeted in any U.S. attack.

Israel destroys Palestinian homes built without permits

BETHLEHEM (AFP) — The Israeli army demolished five Palestinian homes near Jewish settlements in the West Bank on Wednesday because they were built without permits. Palestinian sources said. The army destroyed three homes or structures in Husan, west of Bethlehem, and another two in Zatarah, east of the town, they said. Peter Lerner, spokesman for the Israeli military administration in the West Bank, said the army had demolished five "new additions" to homes that had built without permission. "This was a routine activity," he said.

Israel built 5,000 new homes in settlements

TEL AVIV (AP) — Israel built 5,000 homes in Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip last year, and the majority of the properties have been sold, a newspaper said Wednesday. The demand for cheap, government-subsidised homes in Jewish settlements is "dizzying," the Haaretz daily quoted a senior official in Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu's office as saying. A total of 77 homes were sold last week in two isolated settlements in the heart of the West Bank. Haaretz said.

23 people massacred west of Algiers

ALGIERS (AFP) — Twenty-three people were slaughtered overnight by suspected Islamists at Sidi Djillali near Tlemcen, west of the capital Algiers, the security services announced in a statement Wednesday. They said that one of the assailants was caught by a local defence group and a search was underway for his accomplices. The massacre comes at a time when, according to press reports, the government has launched a series of operations against the Islamists in the western towns of Saida, Sidi Belabes and Tlemcen.

Jordan Times

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Crown Prince: Jordan, U.K. support Annan's trip to Iraq

LONDON (J.T.) — Jordan and the U.K. Wednesday declared their support to U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan's trip to Baghdad on Friday and hoped that the Iraqi-U.N. crisis would be resolved through peaceful means. His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan said after talks on Wednesday with British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook that both countries are "in full agreement and full support for the secretary general's forthcoming mission" to Iraq.

The Crown Prince reiterated Jordan's position, which urges a diplomatic solution to the crisis. He stressed that neither Iraq nor other countries in the region can tolerate another military confrontation.

During the meeting, Prince Hassan also emphasised that Iraq must implement all relevant U.N. resolutions and underline the need for ending the suffering of the Iraqi people. Prince Hassan reiterated Jordan's support for the mission of Mr. Annan in Iraq, expressing hope that Mr. Annan would succeed in securing a diplomatic solution to the crisis.

Talks also dealt with efforts to overcome the obstacles facing the Middle East peace process. The Crown Prince and Mr. Cook underlined the need to even all possible efforts to put the process back on track in order to achieve a comprehensive and lasting peace that guarantees the rights of all parties.

The Crown Prince and the Foreign Secretary also discussed bilateral ties and means of strengthening Euro-Jordanian relations, especially after the signing of the Association Agreement between Jordan and the EU.

Prince Hassan is expected to leave London for Paris Thursday, where he is due to hold talks with French President Jacques Chirac, Prime Minister Lionel Jospin and foreign

Minister Hubert Vedrine on the current Iraq-U.N. standoff, the Middle East peace process and bilateral relations. The talks the Crown Prince will hold in Paris and his meeting with Mr. Cook are part of continued Jordanian efforts led by His Majesty King Hussein to ensure a diplomatic solution to the Iraq-U.N. crisis and protect the whole region from the consequences of another military confrontation.

The meeting was attended by Jordan's ambassador to the U.K., Fuad Ayyoub. Talking to reporters after the meeting, the Crown Prince stressed Jordan's full support for the mission of Mr. Annan in Baghdad, hoping it will succeed in containing the crisis.

Prince Hassan referred to Jordan's continuous contacts with Iraqi officials, other Arab countries, the Arab League, the Organisation of the Islamic Conference, Iran and the permanent members of the Security Council, saying these contacts stem from the Kingdom's

firm determination to avoid a military confrontation in the region. The Crown Prince expressed hope that the intense diplomatic activities and the visit of Mr. Annan to Iraq would produce a firm position in Baghdad that would be conducive to containing the crisis. "We hope the crisis will be contained and the region will be saved the terrible consequences of a military confrontation," he said. Responding to a question, Prince Hassan said "indications and press reports say an attack would be substantial. As we said from the beginning, the situation is not one of deception. It is serious."

Responding to a question, the Crown Prince said: "I would like to make it very clear that in 1990-91, Jordan received 1.5 million refugees. Clearly we were at the top of a list of 24 countries that were affected by the Gulf war after



KEWATIFEAR: A Kuwaiti airport worker tries on a gas mask after a shipment arrived in Kuwait on Wednesday. The Arab Gulf state has been taking several precautionary measures in recent weeks for fear Iraq would retaliate against it if attacked by British and American forces based in Kuwait (Reuters photo)

IAF blasts Emmouh for accepting ministerial post

By Francesca Ciriaci
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The Islamic Action Front (IAF) on Wednesday blasted fellow member Bassam Emmouh for joining the government of Abdul Salam Majali and said it was referring him to the party's court. "The participation of Dr. Emmouh in the government is against the IAF's regulations and policies, especially in a Cabinet which is seeking normalisation with the Jewish enemy and is aligning itself with American policies," said an IAF statement. This cabinet has also turned dogs loose on citizens and hit them with batons," it added, referring to a crackdown on a pro-Iraq rally in downtown Amman last Friday. Dr. Emmouh was not immediately available for comment. Dr. Emmouh was one of six new ministers that Dr. Majali brought into his 25-member team in a minor reshuffle on Tuesday intended to boost the government's image, tarnished by alleged tightening of public freedoms, including the introduction of last May's controversial press amendments, revoked by the High Court of Justice last month. He was appointed minister for administrative development. The powerful Muslim Brotherhood expelled Dr. Emmouh, a "dove" for his opposition to the group's decision to boycott last November's general elections, while the IAF, the political arm of

the Brotherhood, froze his membership in the party. Tensions between the government and the Islamist-led opposition peaked last week, when the IAF defied a government ban on public rallies. Policemen in riot gear dispersed over 500 IAF members and supporters using dogs, teargas, and batons. Three journalists covering the event and IAF leaders were injured. Some saw the inclusion of Dr. Emmouh in the Cabinet as an attempt by the government to mend fences with the opposition. But a Muslim Brotherhood source rejected such suggestions, insisting that Dr. Emmouh's appointment as minister had been under discussion since the days of the former government of Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabarti, replaced in March. "He was promised to become a minister since the beginning of 1997 when Mr. Kabarti was expected to reshuffle his government and negotiated with some Islamist leaders their participation in a coalition Cabinet," he told the Jordan Times. "Politically, he has lost everything but I do not think he cares. He has joined the worst government at the worst time." The source was referring to increased possibilities of a U.S. military attack on Iraq, an idea that has angered many Jordanians who remain sympathetic to Iraq and see the U.S. wield against Baghdad military threats and economic sanctions, but never punish Israel for occupying Arab lands. Jordan has adopted a more cautious stand in the latest Iraq-U.N. crisis, unlike the 1991 Gulf war, when it enraged Arab and Western allies for its perceived pro-Baghdad stand. Jordan, like most Arab countries and beyond, is holding Iraq responsible if it fails to comply with U.N. resolutions.

U.N. mappers wind up job ahead of chief's visit

Annan says mission to Baghdad has reasonable chance of success

Combined agency dispatches

U.N. CHIEF Kofi Annan, after receiving full Security Council support for his mission to Baghdad, said on Wednesday he had a "reasonable chance of success" to avert war. He also said he was encouraged by messages coming from Baghdad that they (the Iraqis) are prepared to engage me constructively.

However, the White House held out little hope Wednesday that Mr. Annan's diplomatic trip to Baghdad will end the standoff over Iraqi arms and said it would be the final judge of whether a military strike is needed. Asked whether he believed the U.N. chief's visit is likely to achieve a breakthrough, White House spokesman Michael McCurry said flatly: "No."

"There's been no indication from the government of Iraq that would lead anyone to be optimistic," he said. "There's been only obfuscation, concealment, deliberate lies about past practices, no indication of a willingness to do the necessary, which is to live up to their international obligations," he concluded.

Mr. McCurry added, however, that it was important that Mr. Annan make a last diplomatic attempt to get Iraq to open suspected weapons sites to U.N. inspectors and expressed full confidence in the secretary general's intentions. The United States has insisted that this is not a negotiating session and that nothing short of full compliance with U.N. resolutions can forestall a military strike.

Earlier, Mr. McCurry stressed that Washington will be the judge of Mr. Annan's success. "We're not just going to willingly accept whatever results from this mission. We want to be able to look at it and make sure that it fulfills the principles that apply," he said. "We reserve the right to judge whatever results from it," he added.

U.N. experts mapping out Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's palaces were reported to be winding up their work Wednesday, while Iraq urged the U.N. secretary general to come to the country free of American prejudices.

The three experts representing Mr. Annan finished visits on Tuesday to seven of the eight palaces at the core of Iraq's dispute with the United Nations, the official Iraqi News Agency (INA) said. It said the team, which includes two Austrian mapmakers, was to visit the last palace Wednesday. The team's leader, Swede Staffan de Mistura, gave no details of the experts' progress as the team headed to work Wednesday morning. But he added: "We're working 24 hours a day."

U.N. officials have kept the work of the three-man team quiet. But they are expected to map out which buildings on the grounds of presidential compounds that arms inspectors want to visit in their search for weapons of mass destruction.

Iraq on Wednesday pined its hopes for peace on an 11th-hour visit by Mr. Annan and insisted the United States was isolated in seeking a military solution to the crisis over arms inspections. Mr. Annan, on his way to Baghdad, will stop in Paris on Thursday and hold a meeting with French President Jacques Chirac, the Elysee Palace press office announced on Wednesday.

Thousands of Iraqi civilians, meanwhile, received weapons training at sites across Baghdad, but few were stocking up on food and gasoline amid a marked absence of war fever. Russia and Egypt said Mr. Annan's visit to Baghdad on Friday raised hopes for peace even as the United States massed almost 30,000 servicemen in the region in the biggest build-up since the 1991 Gulf war.

Russian President Boris Yeltsin sees Mr. Annan's planned trip to Baghdad this week as "vitally important," ITAR-TASS news agency reported on Wednesday. Mr. Annan will stay from Friday to Sunday in Baghdad on the last-ditch trip to defuse a standoff over weapons inspections, officials said.

His spokesman Fred Eckhardt said Mr. Annan is scheduled to depart Paris for Baghdad Friday on a special flight.

Mr. Annan would leave Baghdad Sunday evening, Mr. Eckhardt added. On Wednesday morning, Mr. Annan was briefing the U.N.

Iraqi Kurds limit gasoline sale to Turkish trucks

SIRNAK (AP) — With the prospects of a military intervention in Iraq looming, an Iraqi Kurdish group on Tuesday limited the sale of gasoline to Turkish trucks, an official said. While Turkish trucks before were allowed to transport 5.5 million litres of gasoline per day back to Turkey, the amount was reduced to 2.2 million litres, Haili Utsoy, the governor for southeastern Sirnak province, told reporters. "Only 500 trucks were able to cross the border into Iraq today," Mr. Utsoy said. "Normally, 1,600 go through daily."

FAO sees increased Iraqi rice imports in 1998

ROME (R) — The U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) said on Wednesday that it expected Iraq to increase imports of rice this year. "Iraq's resumption of oil sales as part of the United Nations oil-for-food programme is expected to lead to that country's increased rice imports in 1998," the Rome-based agency said in a January/February food outlook report. Under the oil-for-food deal, begun in December 1996, Iraq can sell \$2 billion worth of oil every six months to buy essential food and medicines to provide humanitarian aid for Iraqis suffering under harsh sanctions since Baghdad's 1990 invasion of Kuwait. Britain last week circulated in the U.N. Security Council a resolution to increase the oil-for-food package to \$5.26 billion over six months. The resolution was sponsored by Portugal and Sweden and came after U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan proposed more than doubling in the amount of oil Iraq can sell.

Security Council on his trip to Iraq. He was joined by Richard Butler, the head of the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM). Official Iraqi news media hoped the secretary general would "fully carry out his role" independent of the United States.

Al-Jumhuriyah newspaper said it hoped the "United States would not turn Mr. Annan's visit into a formality and then argue diplomatic routes have been exhausted" and go ahead with an attack.

U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Bill Richardson reacted cautiously to Mr. Annan's trip. "We wish him well, but we reserve the right to disagree if the conclusion of the trip is not consistent with Security Council resolutions and our

own national interests." Mr. Richardson said the verbal advice given to Mr. Annan by the five Security Council's permanent members was "consistent with the U.S. position — free and unencumbered access to all sites, and full integrity of UNSCOM."

Iraq has refused to provide access to its presidential palaces to UNSCOM on grounds of sovereignty and has demanded a timetable for the lifting of economic sanctions imposed for its 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

In Washington, U.S. President Bill Clinton warned that the U.S. military was prepared to attack Iraq to prevent it from developing weapons of mass destruction.

Israeli, PNA negotiators to meet

HERZLIYA (AFP) — Top Israeli and Palestinian negotiators were due to meet for U.S.-sponsored talks on Wednesday to hammer out agreements on implementing self-rule accords. "This meeting was agreed with Washington to discuss the work of the committees treating the interim issues," said Marwan Kanafani, spokesman for Palestinian President Yasser Arafat. Chief Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat and his Israeli counterpart Danny Naveh will meet at the residence of U.S. Ambassador to Israel Nad Walker at Herzliya near Tel Aviv, Mr. Kanafani said. The joint committees are studying implementation of the interim autonomy accords on issues including the opening of an airport and seaport in the Gaza Strip, creation of an industrial zone and the establishment of a safe corridor for

Palestinians between the West Bank and Gaza. Mr. Erekat and Mr. Naveh held talks in Washington last week with U.S. officials on ways to revive the peace process after 11 months of stalemate but failed to achieve progress.

Israel barred from importing U.S. supercomputers — report

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israel is barred from buying U.S. supercomputers under a new American law because it has not signed the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, military radio said Wednesday. The U.S. law, aimed at computers powerful enough to carry out two billion calculations a second and which can conduct simulated nuclear tests, is due to come into force on Thursday, it reported. Israel already possesses about a dozen supercomputers but will not be obliged to return them because the law is not retroactive, said Irving Rabinovich, local representative of U.S. firm Silicon Graphics. Research, Israel has never confirmed having a nuclear arsenal, saying only that it would not be the first nation to introduce such weapons to the Middle East. Foreign military experts say Israel possesses some 200 warheads which could be placed on medium and long-range Jericho missiles.

Jordan will not permit intrusion of airspace by Israel, Iraq — Haddadin

TEL AVIV (AFP) — A visiting Jordanian minister said Wednesday that Amman would not allow Israel or Iraq to use its airspace for any attacks against each other.

"We shall defend our airspace against any intrusion, east, west, or wherever it comes from," Minister of Water and Irrigation Munther Haddadin

told reporters here.

Israel has not ruled out a strike against Iraq if President Saddam Hussein launches a retaliatory attack to any military confrontation with the United States over the U.N. weapons inspections crisis.

But Israeli Infrastructure Minister Ariel Sharon, who held talks with Dr.

Haddadin, said neither Israel nor Jordan were directly involved in the crisis.

"We, like Jordan, can only sit and watch, hoping for a solution that will enable the region to live in peace for many years," Mr. Sharon said.

Meanwhile, Dr. Haddadin refused to comment on a report by an Israeli

commission of inquiry that backed a failed attack by Israel's Mossad on a leader of the Palestinian group Hamas in Amman in September.

"You are quoting a copy of a report that Jordan has never had a copy of. We will be able to develop a rational answer to that when we read that report," he said.



INSPECTION SITE: Journalists and Iraqi officials Wednesday walk along the Abu Al Baytar biological research center during a tour organised around sites under U.N. inspection in the outskirts of Baghdad. Iraq is locked in a standoff with the U.N. over weapons inspections rights with the threat of a U.S. military attack. The United States gave its conditional endorsement Tuesday for a visit to Baghdad by U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan to try to reach a peaceful solution to the conflict (AP photo)

Iran urges Iraq to cooperate with U.N. arms inspectors

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharazi called on Iraq to cooperate with U.N. arms inspectors during a meeting here Wednesday with Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohammad Said Al Sahhaf.

But Mr. Kharazi also condemned the heavy presence of American and allied forces in the Gulf in preparation for a possible attack on Iraq.

"Iran believes the implementation of U.N. resolutions does not require the use of force. It could be obtained by Iraq's cooperation with U.N. inspectors," he said, quoted by the official IRNA news agency.

The Iranian official said Iran favoured a "peaceful solution" to the crisis "in a

manner that the dignity of Iraqi people will be preserved."

"Iran, in its capacity as the president of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC), favours a political settlement and for that it has deployed all its diplomatic efforts in this direction," he added. "We are in contact with other countries and with the U.N. Secretary General" Kofi Annan.

Mr. Kharazi warned that a U.S.-led military strike against Iraq and the presence of foreign forces threatened Gulf security.

Mr. Sahhaf, who arrived here Wednesday from Paris, briefed Mr. Kharazi on the results of his talks with various world leaders, including French President

Jacques Chirac.

He accused the United States of using its military might to "impose its wishes on Iraq" and asked Iran to "pursue efforts to help reach a political solution" to the crisis.

Mr. Sahhaf is expected to hold talks later Wednesday with Iranian President Mohammad Khatami.

Iran has sharply condemned plans to attack Iraq, saying they were aimed at protecting Israel's interests in the region.

On Tuesday, Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei launched a virulent attack against the United States, accusing the country of trying to "test its new weapons on Iraqi people."

U.S. strike on Iraq could break up region — Hrawi

BAABDA (R) — Lebanese President Elias Hrawi voiced fears on Wednesday that a U.S. attack on Iraq might lead to the break-up of countries in the region.

"I fear a strike against Iraq could be the beginning of the division of the region," Mr. Hrawi told the union of reporters at the presidential palace in Baabda, east of Beirut.

Mr. Hrawi said he was concerned despite U.S. Ambassador in Beirut Richard Jones telling him on Tuesday his fears were misplaced.

"Shrapnel of a U.S. strike would hit the whole region. This would serve Israel's project [of Zionism] begun in 1895...what will happen in Israel's best interest," Mr. Hrawi added.

Lebanon has rejected "a military operation against Iraq while maintaining that U.N. decisions must be respected by all — including Iraq."

Lebanon has also questioned the United Nations "double standards" because of its failure to also force Israel to implement its resolutions, including one passed in 1978 that calls for an immediate and unconditional withdrawal from occupied south Lebanon.

Iranian security forces kill 35 traffickers in anti-drug operation

TEHRAN (AFP) — The Iranian security services killed thirty-five "bandits and drug smugglers" in clashes in the southeast during a wide-ranging operation, the Kayhan newspaper reported Wednesday.

The killings occurred in recent days during a military operation to "comb and mop up drug smugglers and bandits" in the 2,000-square-kilometre mountainous area in

the north of the southern province of Kerman, the operation commander, Brigadier Ali Eshaghi, told the paper.

Iran has been carrying out a war against drug smugglers for several years. The authorities have tightened penalties for drug smuggling and consumption, which they say has become a national scourge increasingly affecting various segments of society and

young people in particular.

Iran is a transit point for drugs coming from Pakistan and Afghanistan and destined for markets in the Gulf, Europe and Central Asia.

Possession of more than 30 grammes of heroin or more than five kilograms of opium is punishable by death.

The authorities confiscate more than 200 tonnes of opium and other narcotics a year in Iran.

Palestinian police arrest pro-Iraq demonstrators; new rally held

NABLUS (AP) — Broadening their crackdown on shows of support for Iraq, Palestinian police arrested a student leader and a cameraman who took part in a banned pro-Iraq demonstration earlier this week, officials said Wednesday.

Also Wednesday, about 100 students at Al Najah University in Nablus burned Israeli and U.S. flags at a rally in support of Iraq in what has become a daily show of defiance in the West Bank.

The Palestinian National Authority (PNA) last week banned such protests, but the ban has been widely ignored and police have largely confined themselves to keeping protesters from clashing with Israeli soldiers.

Wednesday's rally was organised by the student union, dominated by Islamists groups and the Fateh faction.

Students held Iraq flags and a banner reading, "Arabs unite to defend

your honour."

"This is a rally to show our solidarity with the Iraqi people," said Walid Shakoura, a psychology student and Fateh supporter who helped organise the rally.

Mr. Shakoura said the university administration had asked the students to call off the rally, but the students had refused.

In Bethlehem, police arrested Mohammad Abdul Nabil Laham, a Fateh leader and student council president at the city's university, and Akram Najjar, a television cameraman, at their homes Tuesday night. The two had taken part in a student demonstration in Bethlehem earlier in the day.

Police gave no explanation for the arrests, and no charges were filed.

Mr. Laham, 30, is a part-time student who also works as an intelligence agent. Mr. Najjar works for Bethlehem's Shepherd television station, which was closed down by the

PNA on Monday for airing footage of a pro-Iraq protest. He was not working at Tuesday's demonstration.

The PNA has ordered television and radio stations not to air commentary on the Gulf crisis, and on Wednesday the owners of stations were asked to sign a pledge that they would not broadcast footage of any pro-Iraqi demonstrations.

Critics said the PNA was using the Gulf crisis to tighten its control over the private media, which have at times been critical of the PNA.

Palestinian police announced Wednesday that Mr. Arafat would review the licences of the 34 private stations, and decide by next week whether any would have to be closed for violating licensing requirements. Police said new regulations had been introduced, but did not say what they were.

Trial of German accused of planning suicide attack adjourned

TEL AVIV (AFP) — The trial of a German Muslim accused of planning a suicide attack in Israel has been adjourned until next month to await possible extradition proceedings by Bonn, judicial sources said Wednesday.

Steven Smyrek, 26, had been due to appear in a Tel Aviv court on Wednesday to hear the formal charges against him.

Mr. Smyrek is accused of planning a suicide bombing in Israel for the Lebanese Hizbollah guerrilla group and faces up to 10 years in jail if found guilty.

Earlier, military radio said Mr. Smyrek had been taken from prison to hospital several days ago suffering from breathing problems.

He was arrested on Nov. 28 on his arrival at Ben Gurion airport in Tel Aviv from Amsterdam and his trial first opened in January.

He converted to Islam in 1994 and according to Israeli police, admitted having trained from August to November last year at a Hizbollah camp in southern Lebanon for the attack.

But Mr. Smyrek told German weekly newspaper Focus earlier this month that his confession had been "extracted brutally."

The public prosecutor in Hanover, northern Germany, opened a file on Mr. Smyrek in December to see whether there was enough evidence to apply for him to be extradited to Germany for trial.

However prosecutor Nikolaus Borchers, quoted by Focus, said documents handed over by Israel were not enough to make a strong case against him.

Man who cleared Israeli PM over bungled assassination gets El Al job

TEL AVIV (AFP) — The Israeli government Tuesday gave the head of the commission of inquiry into last September's botched assassination attempt on a Hamas leader in Amman a three-year position on the board of the national airline El Al, the Israeli news agency

ITIM reported.

In its report published Monday, the commission, headed by former defence ministry legal counsellor Yossef Chekhanover, cleared Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of any blame for the bungled operation by the Mossad

external intelligence service. The operation led to a sharp downturn in relations with Jordan.

The leader of the Meretz opposition party, Yossi Sarid, said that the appointment was a reward for services rendered. "Contrary to the reputation people have

of him, Mr. Netanyahu is not ungrateful and keeps his promises," joked Mr. Sarid.

Mr. Sarid is a member of the intelligence committee of the Israeli parliament which blamed the prime minister for giving the green light to the operation.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Turkish police clash with newspaper supporters

ISTANBUL (AP) — Police trying to search the premises of a small left-wing newspaper Tuesday clashed with stone-throwing protesters in downtown Istanbul, reports said. More than 30 demonstrators and journalists were arrested. Four police officers and at least two journalists were also hurt in the clashes, the Anatolia news agency reported.

Saudi beheaded for murdering wife

JEDDAH (AP) — A Saudi man was beheaded Wednesday for murdering his wife, the interior ministry said. It did not say when or where the crime took place. The execution was the fourth this year. Last year, the kingdom executed 124 people.

Swiss president to visit Israel in May

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Swiss President Flavio Cotti will make his first visit to Israel in May, the Swiss embassy here said Wednesday. Mr. Cotti, who is also the country's foreign minister, is due to open a synagogue built at Tel Aviv University by Swiss architect Marco Botta. Israeli public radio said Mr. Cotti will also meet Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu during his visit, although the embassy said the final dates have not yet been set.

JORDAN TELEVISION Tel. 773111-19 PROGRAMME TWO	
Thursday Programmes	
14:10 The Dinky Di's	
14:30 The Prince and the Pauper	
15:00 French Programmes	
17:00 NBA	
18:00 Marker	
19:00 Le Journal	
19:15 Documentary	
19:30 News Headlines	
19:35 Big Brother Jake	
20:00 Trivial Pursuit	
20:30 Lois and Clark	
21:10 The Opera Winfrey Show	
22:00 News in English	
22:25 Feature film — "Oxford Blues"	
23:55 Step By Step	
Friday Programmes	
14:10 Cartoon — Teddy Ruxpin	
14:30 French Programmes	
17:00 Children Drama — Lucky Luke	
17:30 Documentary — Blue Water Dreaming	
18:00 Tarzan	
19:00 Le Journal	
19:15 French Programmes	
19:30 News Headlines	
20:00 Documentary — Life on the Internet	
20:30 The Album Show	
21:10 Brisco County	
22:00 News in English	
22:30 Drama — The Beast	
23:10 Comedy — Almost Home	
23:50 End of T.X.	

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

PRAYER TIMES

04:53	Fajr
06:11	(Sunrise) Duha
11:49	Dhuhr
14:59	Asr
17:28	Maghreb
18:46	Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church	Swoffish, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church Tel.	632785
St. Joseph Church Tel.	4624590
Terra Sancta Church Tel.	622366
Anglican Church Tel.	624853/624811
St. Afrem Syrian Orthodox Church Tel.	771751
Amman International Church Tel.	865897
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel.	5688404
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel.	811295

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology

Under the effect of a cold air mass accompanied by a depression affecting the Kingdom today, there will a gradual

and tangible drop in temperatures. Skies will be cloudy to partly cloudy, rainy at intervals, and winds westerly moderate to active. In Aqaba, skies will be partly cloudy with a chance of scattered showers, winds northerly moderate to active, and seas choppy.

Amman05/10
Aqaba10/17
Deserts03/12
Jordan Valley09/16

Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 14, Aqaba 22 Humidity readings: Amman 45 per cent, Aqaba 36 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY	
AMMAN:	
Dr. Abbas Al Hakim	885446
Dr. Ayman Al Muhtaseb	875748
Dr. Jamal Jharah	847351
Dr. Arslan Al Ashhab	560297
Firas pharmacy	5661912
Ferdows pharmacy	778336
Al Asema pharmacy	637055
Nairoukh pharmacy	625672
Al Salam pharmacy	636730
Yacoub pharmacy	644945
Shmeisani pharmacy	637660
Najib pharmacy	847632
IRBID:	

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre	637111
Civil Defence Department	661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue	630341
Civil Defence Emergency	199
Rescue Police 192	621111, 637777
Fire Brigade	617101
Blood Bank	775121
Highway Police	843402
Traffic Police	896390
Public Security Department	630321
Hotel Complaints	605800
Price Complaints	661176
Water and Sewerage Complaints	897467
Amman Municipality Complaints	787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance)	121
Overseas Calls	010230
Central Amman Telephone Repairs	623101
Abdali Telephone Repairs	661101
Jordan Television	773111
Radio Jordan	774111
Water Authority	680100
Jordan Electricity Authority	

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:	
Hussein Medical Centre	813813/32
Khalidi Maternity	644281/6
Akileh Maternity	642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity	642362
Mallhas, J. Amman	636440
Palestine, Shmeisani	607071
Shmeisani Hospital	669131
University Hospital	845845
Al-Muasher Hospital	667227/9
The Islamic, Abdali	666126/37
Al-Abil, Abdali	664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen	777101/3
Al-Bashir	775111/26
Army, Marka	891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital	602240/50
Amal Hospital	674155
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery	865199
ZARQA:	
ZARQA Govt. Hospital	(09)983323
ZARQA National Hospital	(09)900560

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (44)53200 where it should always be verified.

Information on other flights are supplied on phone 44 (52700) or 44 (53250).

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights	
08:15 Sanaa (RJ)	
08:40 Bombay (RJ)	
09:15 Dhahran, Riyadh (RJ)	
09:30 New Delhi (RJ)	
10:05 Beirut (RJ)	
10:05 Muscat, Dubai (RJ)	

Other Flights

13:15 Riyadh (SV)	
14:10 Sharjah (AH)	
15:00 Doha (QR)	
15:20 Muscat, Doha (GF)	
16:00 Dubai (EK)	
16:30 Rome (AZ)	
20:00 Tel Aviv (MS)	
20:10 Beirut (ME)	
20:40 Cairo (MS)	
23:10 Istanbul (TK)	
23:30 London, Beirut (BA)	

Other Flights

00:35 Amsterdam (KL)	
03:00 Athens (OA)	
06:40 Beirut, London (BA)	
08:00 Beirut (ME)	
11:20 London (BA)	
14:45 Riyadh (SV)	
15:00 Algiers (AH)	
15:55 Doha (QR)	
16:20 Abu Dhabi, Doha (GF)	
17:00 Muscat, Dubai (EK)	
17:30 Rome (AZ)	
21:20 Tel Aviv (LY)	
21:40 Cairo (MS)	
08:00 Beirut (ME)	

Royal Wings

(For Thursday and Friday)	
06:45 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)	
08:15 Agaba (RW)	
09:30 Amman (QAIA) (RW)	
16:45 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)	
17:55 Tel Aviv (RW)	
20:30 Amman (QAIA) (RW)	
21:50 Agaba (RW)	

Queen meets with new UNICEF officials

AMMAN (J.T.) — Her Majesty Queen Noor Wednesday met with the new United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) area representative, Misrak Elias, and new UNICEF regional director, Ibrahim Fall, at Bab Al Salam Palace, according to press release.

They discussed UNICEF's Master Plan of Operations in Jordan for the years 1998-2002 and the ongoing cooperation between UNICEF and the National Task Force for Children (NTFC). Queen Noor expressed the country's appreciation of UNICEF's programmes, which serve the larger region, and commended the work of its regional office in Amman, the announcement read.

Ms Elias said UNICEF will continue to "build on the excellent relations with the NTFC," especially in developing regional models for the realisation of the goals of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child. NHF and UNICEF collaboration includes support for NHF's Institute for Child Health and Development, which provides primary health care training for Min-

istry of Health and Medical Care professionals, with emphasis on the prevention and early detection of childhood disabilities.

UNICEF is looking into expanding its cooperation with the NHF, particularly the foundation's Quality of Life Project, a pioneering model initiated with the World Health Organisation for comprehensive national and regional development that integrates labour intensive and self-employment schemes with health, education, national heritage, the environment and community participation, according to the statement.

UNICEF has assisted the NTFC's multi-disciplinary committee in reviewing and developing the Draft Children's Act, which is based on the International and Arab Conventions on the Rights of the Child. The Draft Children's Act will be submitted to Parliament after being reviewed by the government's legislative department.

Queen Noor's social policy advisor, In'am Mufit, NHF Executive Director Sima Bahous, UNICEF Programme Officer Ayman Abu Laban and UNICEF Regional Communication Officer Anis

Salami also attended the meeting.

Also Wednesday, Queen Noor met with the sponsors of the Noor Al Hussein Foundation CD-ROM at Bab Al Salam.

The CD-ROM's design and production costs were covered entirely by contributions from Senator Kamal Shair, the Housing Bank, the Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation and the Arab Pharmaceuticals Manufacturing Company. The CD-ROM was designed and produced by integrated Business Solutions, a local firm that specialises in database and multimedia applications. All the elements and materials used in the design of the CD-ROM, such as the background imagery and the control buttons, were inspired by the products of the foundation. The inserts of the CD-ROM cover, which were printed in Jordan, are from paper handmade from plant fibres by women at an NHF project in Iraq. Al Amir, the press release said.

The Noor Al Hussein Foundation (NHF) CD-ROM, entitled "New Perspectives for Development, Portfolio 1985-1998," is an interactive multimedia application featuring

NHF national and regional projects in the fields of integrated community development, education, culture, children's welfare, family health, women and gender issues, and enterprise development. Captioned photographs that can be zoomed out, video clips (with narration by HRH Prince Talal Ben Mohammad) and a map outlining the distribution of the projects in Jordan accompany information on each project.

The CD-ROM includes musical pieces performed by the Arab Music Ensemble of the NHF's National Music Conservatory as well as a video message from Queen Noor outlining the philosophy and goals of the foundation.

According to Dr. Bahous, the CD-ROM will be updated on a yearly basis and coupled with the NHF Web site, will put the NHF in the new field of informatics, making information on the foundation's projects and programmes easy to access both nationally and internationally. This complements the organisational restructuring that the NHF is undergoing as it is poised to enter the 21st century, the statement concluded.

Deputies express concern over possible Israeli-owned factories in Kingdom

By Fairouz Abu-Ghazaleh
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Several Lower House deputies Wednesday said they were concerned by the recent establishment of Israeli-run factories in some parts of the Kingdom.

Though Israelis can set up factories in Jordan under the 1994 peace treaty, the issue had divided many Jordanians who remain opposed to the treaty.

"Regarding the Jewish factories, or those registered under Arab names but run by Jews in Irbid and other parts of Jordan, I ask the government to study this matter quickly and present the House with a clear picture on the dangers posed by these factories," said Deputy Mohammad Bani Hani.

Jordan and Israel, in the presence of U.S. Secretary of State

Madeleine Albright, signed an agreement designating a Qualifying Industrial Zone (QIZ) at the controversial Middle East and North Africa economic conference held in Doha in November.

The QIZ, a new industrial zone established in the northern city of Irbid, has attracted many Israeli-based global multinational who shifted capital, production lines and investments — so far the most tangible by-product of peace with the Jewish state.

The QIZ is at the heart of American-Israeli-Jordanian efforts to deliver an elusive peace dividend to many Jordanians.

Deputy Mijhem Shour claimed that workers in these factories were "extremely underpaid," working for six to seven hours a day for a monthly

salary of JD40 to JD50. "We demand an answer from the government regarding control over these factories, and we ask it to put an end to this important issue," Mr. Shour said.

Deputy Prime Minister Abdullah Ensour tried to comfort the worried deputies by denying that such factories existed.

"There are no Jewish factories. There are factories that are, in some cases, under joint ownership, and these are very few and do not pose any threat," Dr. Ensour said.

He also said that unlike other countries, Jordan does not set a specified minimum wage for workers.

Under the QIZ deal, which was implemented late last year, enterprises established at Irbid-Al Hassan industrial estate will

be allowed to export their goods to U.S. markets free of customs duties without reciprocity.

For Israel, the QIZ, which houses 45 plants and makes everything from textiles to electronic components, is a blessing, allowing it to benefit from Jordan's infrastructure and its cheaper labour force to boost trade with Washington, its main ally.

Also during yesterday's session, the House approved the draft 1997 law covering an oil exploration agreement between the Natural Resources Authority and a foreign firm.

Meanwhile, the House resumed its discussion of a draft law regulating the work of the agricultural engineers association.

Suspect throws grenade at police; none injured

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — A grenade thrown at police officers chasing a suspect exploded in a street in Jabal Al Hussein Wednesday evening, damaging windows of two parked cars but causing no injuries, according to an official source.

The incident, which occurred at the busy street of the Freres College, forced security officers to close the street for several hours.

According to the source, the preventive security officers were following a suspect wanted for several cases, and when they trapped him, he threw a hand grenade towards them.

"The security officers avoided the explosive, but it exploded in the street, and shattered the windows of two parked cars," the official source said.

The official added that police arrested the man and are questioning him.

In other incidents in the Kingdom, police arrested a 22-year-old man who on Wednesday allegedly stabbed another man to death in the Salhiat Abed area southeast of Amman, the source stated.

According to the source, the suspect, identified only as M.A., stabbed his friend identified only by his first initial, M.L., over an argument.

Police said they have arrested the suspect and are investigating the incident.

House committee rejects three claims contesting deputies' election

AMMAN (J.T.) — A Lower House committee formed to investigate claims of election irregularities in the Nov. 4 parliamentary ballot Wednesday rejected three of the four petitions filed against Amman Fifth District deputies.

The claims had questioned the membership of deputies Mohammad Abu Hdaib, Ahmad Abbadi, Ahmad Ajameh, Asaf Asaf and Munir Sobar.

"We dismissed the claims because they fell short of meeting the required procedures," Amman First District Deputy Khalil Attieh, a committee member, told the Jordan Times.

He said one of the cases was filed after the deadline while another was filed by a man who was registered in the Amman Second District, not the Fifth.

The committee's decision on the fourth claim will be announced next week.

A second committee, investigating claims contesting the validity of the election of Ma'an deputies, told the 80-seat Lower House Sunday it had rejected the claims because it found no grounds to substantiate them.

The claims were filed against all three Ma'an deputies: Ahmad Al Khatab, Nayef Hillaal and Walid Awajan.

A committee formed to study a claim against Third District Deputy Nayef Mula, who was running for the Circassian seat against former Deputy Toujan Faisal, has not yet completed its investigation, according to committee member Ghazi Fayed from the Central Badia.

He said the committee was

expected to announce its findings in the coming two weeks.

The last two committees, investigating claims against Zarka deputies — Adnan Mir'le, Mikhlid Zuwareh, Noman Ghewir, Hmoud Khalil, Bassam Haddadin and Mansour Murad — and Balqa deputies — Fawzi Tu'imeh, Samir Kawar, Hashim Al Waked — are expected to conclude their work next week.

Several newspaper columnists have criticised the process of contesting election results. Popular writer Fakhr Kassar suggested that "people should stop contesting election results because the outcome is clear. No deputy has ever been discharged from Parliament because the committee backed a claim contesting his victory."

RSCN team discovers remains of rare felines in Jordan Valley

AMMAN (J.T.) — A team from the Studies and Research Centre at the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (RSCN) reported Wednesday that they have discovered the bodies of two "jungle cats" in the Jordan Valley.

RSCN researcher Mahdi Qatramiz said the jungle cat is much larger than the domestic cat but a little smaller than the leopard. They measure nearly 90 centimetres in length, weigh an average of 14 kilograms, and live near rivers and in dense forests.

This is the fourth time that jungle cats have been found in the Kingdom, following previous instances in 1902, 1958 and 1990, according to the researcher, who noted that the

RSCN has not registered this animal as a rare species under its protection because none of the jungle cats have been taken alive.

Mr. Qatramiz said the jungle cat is harmless, does not attack humans, keeps away from inhabited regions most of the time, and is rather useful because it feeds on rodents and reptiles.

According to Mr. Qatramiz, the jungle cat can reach speeds of 52 kilometres per hour, but spends most of its time climbing trees and perching on tree branches.

The RSCN team recently found an injured jungle cat in the Jordan Valley, but it soon died despite efforts to save its life, he said.

He said a search in the same area turned up the body of another jungle cat, which probably died after eating a poisonous substance used by local farmers to kill boars.

An RSCN official said it is regrettable that farmers resort to poisonous substances, which often kill boars, birds, and other animals that the RSCN has been trying to save.

The RSCN, which is a private, voluntary organisation with public service status, was established in 1966 for the conservation of nature and natural resources.

At present, the RSCN operates six wildlife reserves for rare species of animals threatened with extinction.

UNDP to hold workshop to evaluate Jordan's development strategy

AMMAN (J.T.) — Under the patronage of Minister of Social Development Mohammad Khair Mamsar, a one-day workshop, sponsored by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), will be held on Feb. 23 to evaluate Jordan's national strategy for the 1995 World Summit for Social Development, according to a UNDP press release Wednesday.

The Social Summit, which was held in Copenhagen,

Denmark in March 1995 by the U.N., identified three key issues which policy-makers should focus on around the world — poverty alleviation, social integration and job creation. To effectively address these issues, the Social Summit called on each country to design its own national strategy, the statement said.

The workshop is part of a UNDP project to assist the government in formulating and implementing a national strategy as a follow-up to the

recommendations of the Social Summit. The Ministry of Social Development has already drawn up a national plan to tackle poverty and unemployment as well as bolster social integration in Jordan. This plan will be on the agenda for discussion at the workshop.

According to the UNDP, much work has been done on poverty alleviation and employment, but less has been done on social integration, particularly in areas of

social protection for vulnerable segments of society.

At the workshop, policy-makers and development experts will discuss the Social Productivity Programme, the government's plan to reduce poverty and unemployment, and also review Jordan's anti-poverty policies and plans. UNDP declared poverty alleviation as its overriding priority at the Social Summit three years ago, the announcement concluded.

Touring youth ship docks in Aqaba today

AMMAN (Petra) — The World Youth Ship, which has been touring the world for two months, is scheduled to dock at Aqaba today and the estimated 320 youths on board will visit Jordanian archaeological sites, including the ancient city of Petra, among other activities.

In a statement released Wednesday, the Ministry of Youth said the ship's voyage, sponsored by the Japanese government, is an annual event enabling youth from different parts of the world, including Jordan, to visit various locations with messages of friendship.

The ship will conclude its 10th annual voyage with a visit to Muscat after Aqaba before returning to Japan, said the statement. In their several-day stay,

the youth on board the ship will organise seminars, dialogues, meetings, and other social, voluntary and sports activities during their stay in southern Jordan, the statement added.

The ministry has prepared a programme for the guests in Aqaba featuring Jordanian folklore performances, while the ship will host visitors and the media who can board the ship for other activities.

The youth on board the ship, representing 13 countries, will present performances on their respective countries' culture, according to the statement, adding that these youths will visit the SOS village in Aqaba, local industrial plants, the Science Marine Station, and the other sites during their tours.

Canada to support feasibility study of nursing college

AMMAN (Petra) — Canada is to help Jordan conduct a feasibility study on establishing an advanced nursing college and will sign a special agreement for this project Saturday.

Canada is expected to cover 88 per cent of the cost of these studies for this college, the first of its kind to involve Canadian assistance, while the private and public sectors will cover the remaining part of the cost.

The projected college is expected to cater to the requirements of modern nursing, covering primary health services in Jordan and neighbouring Arab countries.

The private sector in Jordan and abroad, especially Canada, will be encouraged to invest in this project, vital for promoting the nursing profession in the country.

Currently, Jordan has seven schools that graduate nurses and midwives, but according to the president of the nursing and midwives association, Hashem Salameh, more qualified nurses are needed to work in hospitals and health centres.

Two of the nursing schools are run by the Ministry of Health, two by state universities, and two by private universities, in addition to a school run by the Jordan Armed Forces Medical Services.

Qutubeh Abu Qura, deputy director of the Jordanian Investments Corporation (JIC), who will sign the agreement with the Canadians, said the corporation was instrumental in attracting a Canadian firm to help Jordan promote the nursing profession through the advanced college.

University of Jordan students march in support of Iraq

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Hundreds of students at the University of Jordan burned American and Israeli flags Wednesday during a peaceful march in support of Iraq, engulfed in a crisis with the United Nations.

Over 400 students marched through the campus, chanting "There is no god but God, we are behind you Iraq," before stopping at the main gate where dozens of police, armed with batons, tear gas and guns, were waiting to prevent them from leaving the compound.

"[U.S. President] Bill Clinton is the enemy of God" and "Palestine and Iraq are the hands of the Mujahideen [Muslim freedom fighters]," they shouted.

Jordan has banned all popular rallies to prevent possible violence or a flare-up of pro-Iraqi sentiments. Under law, police are not allowed inside university grounds.

The crowd sang nationalist songs during the one-hour march. Several activists addressed

the segregated crowd at points during the march, condemning U.S. and British threats to launch military strikes against Iraq and demanding that foreign troops withdraw from the Gulf.

They also condemned the use of force to break up a pro-Iraq rally held in downtown Amman on Friday in defiance of the ban.

"No to U.S. aggression," "No to the malicious Zionists," "The butcher will not have mercy," and "The aggression against Iraq is also a strike on the Arab Nation" read some of the banners that were carried by several members of the powerful Muslim Brotherhood, which controls the university's students council, the organiser of the march.

Other students waved black flags in a sign of mourning. Deputy chief of the students council, Moutasim Abu Dari, blasted the government for its perceived pro-Western stand in the latest Iraq-U.N. crisis. He also criticised its decision to ban rallies.

"Why is our government attempting to silence the voice

of freedom and ban rallies that support the Iraqi people?" Mr. Abu Dari asked the gathering.

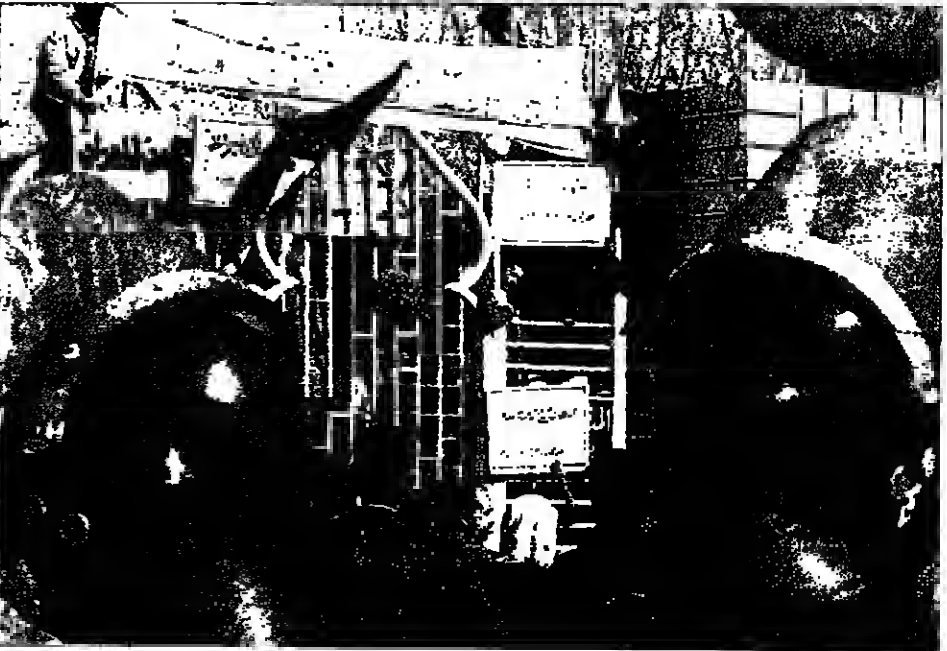
"The aim of the U.S. strike is to split Iraq into several entities and to reshape the map of the Middle East," he added.

In another development, the Islamist-led opposition parties are expected to hold a pro-Iraq rally in the northern city of Irbid on Friday, opposition sources said.

Irbid Governor Qafan Majali has warned them not to take to the streets, local dailies reported Wednesday.

Meanwhile, nearly 200 Arab and Jordanian schoolchildren sent a petition to United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan urging him to do his utmost to prevent a possible U.S. military strike on Iraq. Mr. Annan is expected to travel to Baghdad on Friday in a last-ditch attempt to defuse the standoff.

"We have heard sad and terrible news about Iraq, which we love and adore," they said in a letter, a copy of which was obtained by the Jordan Times. "We have many



Police stand on alert Wednesday outside the campus of the University of Jordan during a demonstration in support of Iraq. Under Jordanian law, police are not allowed to enter university compounds (AFP photo)

friends in Iraq and we pray to God that this news is not true," said the eight-page petition, signed by 180 schoolchildren.

"We hear every day in the

news that military ships have come to shell our Arab lands and that armies from several countries are besieging us to take our lands, water and food," it added.

"We, the Arab children, extend our hands to the world and say: Let war stop immediately...enough destruction on us and on the children of Iraq."

NEWS IN BRIEF

(Turkish police clash with newspaper supporters)

STANBUL (AP) — Police trying to search the premises of a small left-wing newspaper Tuesday clashed with stone-throwing protesters in downtown Istanbul, reports said. More than 30 demonstrators and journalists were arrested. Four police officers and at least two journalists were also hurt in the clashes, the Associated Press news agency reported.

audi beheaded for murdering wife

EDDAH (AP) — A Saudi man was beheaded Wednesday for murdering his wife, the interior ministry said. It did not say when or where the crime took place. The execution was the fourth this year, the ministry said. The kingdom executed 124 people.

wiss president visit Israel in May

EL AVIV (AP) — Swiss President Fawsti will make his first visit to Israel in May, the Swiss embassy here said Wednesday. Mr. Coni, who also has his country's foreign minister, is due to open a synagogue built at Tel Aviv University by Swiss architect Marco Boss. Israeli public radio said Mr. Coni will also meet Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu during his visit, although the embassy said the final dates have not yet been set.

Amsterdam, Chicago (R) ... Tunis, Casablanca (R) ... Abu Dhabi, Al Ain (R) ... Kuwait (R) ... Athens, Paris (R) ... London (R) ... Lima (R) ... Jakarta (R) ... Cairo (R) ... Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta (R)

er Flights ... Amsterdam (KL) ... Athens (OA) ... Beirut, London (BA) ... Beirut (ME) ... London (BA) ... Riyadh (SV) ... Athens (AH) ... Doha (QR) ... Abu Dhabi, Doha (GF) ... Almaty, Doha (EK) ... Rome (AZ) ... Tel Aviv (LY) ... Cairo (MS) ... Beirut (ME)

Wings ... Thursday and Friday ... Amman (Marka Airport) ... Amman (RWA) ... Amman (QIA/RW) ... Amman (Marka Airport) ... Tel Aviv (RW) ... Amman (QIA/RW) ... Amman (RWA)

Taiwan press calls for more safety measures at China Airlines

TAIPEI (AFP) — Taiwan's press Wednesday targeted China Airlines urging greater safety measures and better management on commercial flights and questioning whether pilot error could have led to the island's worst air disaster.

"The crash of a China Airlines plane Monday night... is a tragedy that has once again raised public concern about the safety of CAL flights," The China Post said in its headline editorial.

The paper suggested "human error" could have been a factor, adding it "apparently is also a major point of investigation."

The comments were published as a team from Airbus Industrie, which built the downed Airbus 300-600, arrived at the crash scene Wednesday to assist in the official investigation by Taiwan's Civil Aeronautics Administration.

All 184 passengers and 14 crew died when CAL Flight 676 from the Indonesian resort island of Bali slammed into a block of houses next to Chang Kai-Shek International Airport on a landing attempt.

Local press reports have focused on the flight's final moments in searching for a reason for the crash, with many pointing out that the pilot seemed to have decided to abort a first attempt to land.

After the first try, "if the aircraft indeed failed to gain enough altitude... it might have been too late for the pilot to make his second landing attempt when he tried to do so," the Post said.

It also speculated a mechanical failure could have been a factor, adding CAL officials had said "the

Airbus 300-600R, having been in service for only seven years, had been maintained in good condition."

"Although the exact cause of this week's air disaster is still unknown, the tragedy will certainly make it necessary for CAL to make further safety improvements to restore customer confidence," the editorial concluded.

The Central Daily News said: "We do understand that in the past years, CAL authorities have pushed for various reforms to enforce safety measures and upgrade maintenance and staff training... but the crash has offset all efforts."

"Under great competition in the world aviation market, reforms have to continue, otherwise the airline will soon be wiped out," the paper run by the ruling Kuomintang party said.

The China Times also urged CAL to modernise its management and strengthen the training of pilots, most of whom are retired air force officers.

"Many pilots who used to fly air force jets do not follow the rules, and some crew live corrupt lives, which greatly endanger air safety," it said, without elaborating.

Meanwhile, a Taiwan legislator Wednesday alleged that China Airlines (CAL) authorities had changed flying records of the pilot and co-pilot of one of its jetliners which crashed claiming 202 lives.

"A CAL staff member told me that he saw with his own eyes someone changing the flying hours of the pilot and co-pilot after the crash of the Airbus 300-600 Monday evening," legislator Chen Hung-Chi from the ruling Kuomintang party said.

Mr. Chen did not say what changes were allegedly made but added it was a standing rule for CAL pilots to fly no more than 32 hours a week and 100 hours each month to avoid overwork which could put air safety at risk.

"CAL does not follow the rules," he alleged. But CAL spokesman Steve Yang immediately denied the allegation, saying all flying records were in the computer "which can not be revised or erased."

"I do not know the intention of the legislator... but we definitely do not change any record," he added.

CAL Flight 676 smashed into a row of houses near Chiang Kai-Shek International Airport and burst into flames, killing all 182 passengers and 14 crew on board. Six people on the ground also died.

Foreigners named in Taiwan plane crash

Five Americans and an Indonesian were named Wednesday as victims of Monday's China Airlines jetliner crash as officials struggled to identify their remains, the airline said.

Americans Laurence Smith, Christopher Cory, Kenneth Cowan, Jacques Augustin and Tom Hadel were among 182 passengers who died in the crash of CAL Flight 676 from Indonesia's resort island of Bali Monday.

Indonesian national Nyoman Sukadarma also died when the plane slammed into a row of houses beside Chiang Kai-Shek International Airport during an attempt to land.

Fourteen crew members also died, while the remaining passengers were Taiwanese. Most were returning from holidays.

Earlier reports had put the number of foreigners at seven.

The airline did not say why the figure had been changed.

Pilots switched to manual flight seconds before crash

The pilot of the China Airlines (CAL) Airbus 300-600 switched from the autopilot mechanism to manual flight control seconds before it crashed, killing 202 people, an airline spokesman said Wednesday.

Spokesman Hamilton Liu said two ringing sounds heard in the last minutes of communications between Captain Kang Lung-Lin and the control tower were an audio signal acknowledging the switch in steering control.

It was routine for pilots to switch to manual control before landing, Mr. Liu said. But it "remained to be investigated" why the autopilot system was cancelled only seconds before the plane crashed, killing all on board and six people on the

ground.

According to aviation technicians, pilots usually switch to manual landing around 500 metres above the ground.

But it seemed that the pilot of the ill-fated aircraft did so when the plane was only about five kilometres away from the runway. At its altitude at the time, it was hard to try a second landing, the United Evening News said.

The paper also said the wreckage of the plane's landing gear indicated it was ready for a second landing attempt, but it was too late for the pilot to put the plane into a climb.

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Former French minister faces new corruption charge

PARIS (AFP) — Former French Industry Minister Gerard Longuet has been charged with fraud for selling a plagiarised report, the investigative weekly *Canard Enchaîné* reported Wednesday.

Judicial sources confirmed the charge was laid on Nov. 16 last by investigating magistrate Mireille Filippini before she retired.

Her probe concerned consultancy companies operated by Mr. Longuet, who resigned in 1994 as industry minister after coming under investigation as to how he financed construction of his holiday villa at Saint-Tropez on the French Riviera.

As president of the consultancy *Avenir 55*, Mr. Longuet is accused of having sold two undated and unsigned reports to building promoters COGEDIM, which had been plagiarised from two existing studies.

COGEDIM paid 1.1 million francs (about \$180,000) for the reports.

One was allegedly copied from a report commissioned by the post and telecommunications ministry when Mr. Longuet was its minister and another from work done by a telecommunications consultancy.

The former president of COGEDIM, Michel Maurer, faces fraud charges in the same case.

In November Mr. Longuet was cleared of a corruption charge over the abnormally easy credit terms he enjoyed from a construction firm that built his Riviera home. But he faces a retrial after the prosecutor's office lodged an appeal.

Magistrate Filippini was also investigating illegal financing of the Republican Party, since renamed Liberal Democracy, when Mr. Longuet was its president.



Mourners walk through the crash site with a portrait of their loved one who was killed in the China Airlines Airbus 300-600 crash as workers continue to search through the wreckage. Families of the more than 200 victims returned to the crash site to mourn the dead, many of whose remains have not been identified (AFP photo)

Indonesia fires could be worse than in 1997 without rain, officials say

JAKARTA (AFP) — Forest fires in Indonesia's East Kalimantan could be worse than last year if the drought in the province continues into the middle of this year, environmentalists and officials said Wednesday.

"If East Kalimantan stays dry until June, it will get worse than it did last year," Longgeng Ginting of the Indonesian environmental watchdog WALHI told AFP.

Mr. Ginting said the increasing number of hotspots detected by satellite were mostly caused either by natural heat sources such as coal mines or by the timber-clearing activities of certain timber and palm oil companies.

Local governments can also be an obstacle, he said. "Sometimes we wonder how serious the local government's intentions are in handling the fires."

Fires in Kalimantan and on Sumatra Island sent a haze of choking smog over the region last year, causing deaths and numerous health and transportation problems. They were blamed largely on big firms setting fires to clear land.

Mr. Ginting said WALHI had not yet finished collecting data on how much forest and ground area had been destroyed by the recent fires.

Government estimates place this year's damage at some 3,800 hectares in Kalimantan province but Mr. Ginting said the damage would likely be much greater than the official figure.

WALHI estimated the damage from fires in 1997 at nearly 1.7 million hectares in the whole of Kalimantan, the Indonesian part of Borneo Island.

"East Kalimantan has

been extremely dry over the past two months and this could go on until June," Mr. Ginting added.

Government officials have said waterbombing has helped get the fires under control and has reduced the number of hot spots in the province this year to 74 from 600.

State Minister for People's Welfare Azwar Anas has largely blamed the fires on the El Niño weather pattern, an unseasonal warming of waters in the Pacific Ocean that can have devastating effects on land.

At risk are thousands of hectares of land in the 200,000-hectare Kutai National Park in East Kalimantan.

Thick haze has already been reported over the province of Riau in Sumatra Island, where 27 hot spots have been detected by satellite.

Red Cross delays first airdrop for Afghan quake victims

ROSTAQ, Afghanistan (AFP) — Red Cross officials Wednesday postponed for a day an airdrop of emergency supplies into northern Afghanistan, two weeks after the region was hit by a huge earthquake which killed 4,500 people.

"Because of technical problems the airdrop has been delayed until tomorrow," said ICRC relief coordinator Svente Yngrot. He said the Hercules transport aircraft to be used in the drop had come from Africa and Red Cross officials needed to fully brief the pilots and agree on the approach altitude.

Svente added that the airdrop had been rescheduled, weather permitting, for Thursday. Two flights were planned between Rostaq and the Pakistani city of Peshawar, a round trip of four hours, he said.

Red Cross officials had earlier hoped to drop 100 tonnes of supplies Wednesday afternoon on snowbound plains surrounding Rostaq, close to the epicentre of the quake.

The officials said the supplies included soap, blankets,

plastic sheeting, cooking utensils, sugar, tents and matches, to be distributed using an ICRC-chartered helicopter which was also due to arrive Wednesday from the Tajik capital Dushanbe.

"One of the main needs is soap because of skin diseases caused by poor hygiene for displaced people," said Mr. Yngrot.

"There are about 5,000 survivors in collective centres, hut at the moment we don't have the time to go into the villages and make a full assessment of how many homeless there are there."

"The roads have been so bad and we have not been able to forward emergency survival commodities," he said.

"The idea has been to get the supplies here as quickly as possible, but the weather has made it impossible."

France donates \$80,000 for Afghan quake victims

ISLAMABAD (AFP) — France has donated \$80,000 for the earthquake-stricken people in Afghanistan's northern province of Takhar, the French embassy here said Wednesday.

The donation is in response to an appeal by the United Nations and the International Committee of the Red Cross to help fund airdrops of essential items for those affected in remote villages, it said.

The ICRC Friday launched an appeal for 5.6 million Swiss francs (about \$3.8 million) to help the victims of the Feb. 4 quake which measured 5.6 on the Richter scale.

An ICRC communiqué from Geneva said the money would go to fund aid operations for victims and to cover work being done by the local Red Cross for an initial period of two months.

Aid organisations have put the death toll at 4,500 dead. Thousands more were left homeless in the stricken region.

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Murders turn foreign buyers off South Africa property

CAPE TOWN (AFP) — Estate agents who once had no trouble selling Cape Town homes to foreigners are struggling in the wake of the murder of two tourists last month, the Star newspaper said Wednesday.

An American businessman and his South African girlfriend were killed by car hijackers in Cape Town. That came days after a German tourist was stabbed to death on a Durban beach in front of his two sons

at a New Year's Eve party.

Now Cape Town estate agents are saying that despite recent interest rate cuts, and the prospect of more cuts to come, Germans in particular had lost "almost all interest" in the property market here, according to the Star.

Last year about one in five houses sold in certain upmarket suburbs of Cape Town went to foreign buyers as prices soared in advance of the

city's bid to host the 2004 Olympics, which eventually failed.

But since the murders, agents have struggled to sell a single house to a foreigner.

The leafy suburbs of picturesque Cape Town, where palatial homes are cheap compared to European prices, have attracted the likes of Mark Thatcher, son of former British premier Margaret Thatcher, and Princess Diana's brother, Charles Spencer.

Former French minister faces new corruption charge

PARIS (AFP) — Former French Industry Minister Gerard Longuet has been charged with fraud for selling a plagiarised report, the investigative weekly *Canard Enchaîné* reported Wednesday.

Judicial sources confirmed the charge was laid on Nov. 16 last by investigating magistrate Mireille Filippini before she retired.

Her probe concerned consultancy companies operated by Mr. Longuet, who resigned in 1994 as industry minister after coming under investigation as to how he financed construction of his holiday villa at Saint-Tropez on the French Riviera.

As president of the consultancy *Avenir 55*, Mr. Longuet is accused of having sold two undated and unsigned reports to building promoters COGEDIM, which had been plagiarised from two existing studies.

COGEDIM paid 1.1 million francs (about \$180,000) for the reports.

One was allegedly copied from a report commissioned by the post and telecommunications ministry when Mr. Longuet was its minister and another from work done by a telecommunications consultancy.

The former president of COGEDIM, Michel Maurer, faces fraud charges in the same case.

In November Mr. Longuet was cleared of a corruption charge over the abnormally easy credit terms he enjoyed from a construction firm that built his Riviera home. But he faces a retrial after the prosecutor's office lodged an appeal.

Magistrate Filippini was also investigating illegal financing of the Republican Party, since renamed Liberal Democracy, when Mr. Longuet was its president.

Georgia arrests two more for Shevardnadze attack

TBILISI (R) — Georgian police have detained two more people suspected of taking part in a failed attempt to assassinate President Eduard Shevardnadze last week, officials said Wednesday.

First Deputy Prosecutor-General Revaz Kipiani said the pair were arrested in Zugdidi, western Georgia, on charges related to the Feb. 9 rocket-propelled grenade attack on Mr. Shevardnadze's motorcade, bringing the total number of those detained in the affair to seven.

Zugdidi was a stronghold of late former president Zviad Gamsakhurdia, whose supporters Mr.

Shevardnadze blamed for the latest attempt on his life.

Mr. Shevardnadze, a former Soviet foreign minister, came to power after Gamsakhurdia, Georgia's first elected leader, was ousted in a bloody coup in January 1992. Gamsakhurdia died in mysterious circumstances in 1993.

Mr. Shevardnadze, 70, who is credited with helping end the cold war but now is struggling to foster stability and prosperity in his small native land after years of civil war, says his attackers trained abroad and were linked to a Gamsakhurdia ally who

Georgia says is in hiding in Moscow, protected by certain Russian interests.

The president escaped unhurt when his motorcade came under a hail of bullets and rocket-propelled grenades in the capital Tbilisi last week, the second assassination bid he has survived following a car bomb attack in August, 1995.

Leaders of Russia's breakaway Muslim region of Chechnya, which borders Georgia, have said they are investigating claims by a maverick guerrilla leader, Salman Raduyev, that his forces took part in last week's attack.

Mediaset, Murdoch hold talks

ROME (AFP) — The television group Mediaset has had talks recently with representatives of Australian communications magnate Rupert Murdoch, Mediaset President Fedele Confalonieri acknowledged Wednesday.

Mr. Confalonieri said in the interview with *Il Sole 24 Ore* that the talks had not covered any question of Rupert Murdoch taking control of Mediaset.

"We do not have information about such intentions by Murdoch and we are not interested in handing things over," he said. "It would be very expensive. Mediaset is worth 11,000 or 12,000 billion lire (about \$6.6 billion)."

He told the *Il Sole 24 Ore* newspaper: "Today one must think European. Television cannot work without international alliances and by restricting itself to television..."

So why is it strange if Murdoch talks to us?"

Mediaset and Fininvest are part of a communications group controlled by former Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, and Tuesday Fininvest denied that any discussions had taken place with Rupert Murdoch.

The report Tuesday drove up the price of the shares in Mediaset by 4.0 per cent.

Two defecting Bangladesh MPs join parliament session

DHAKA (AFP) — Two MPs from the main opposition Bangladesh Nationalist party (BNP) who defected to join the government as ministers Wednesday took part in the parliament session.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wajed's "government of national consensus" in the past several days were welcomed by lawmakers.

Deputy Leader of the House Zillur Rahman said both BNP members had joined the "government of national consensus" responding to the

call of the prime minister.

The two were expelled from the BNP, but did not resign from the opposition party. The BNP had demanded Swapan's seat be vacated.

The BNP has refused to attend the current session of parliament.

Italy's centre-right opposition hit by defections

ROME (R) — Italy's centre-right opposition freedom alliance was divided and weakened Wednesday after some members of two smaller parties defected to a new political grouping headed by former president Francesco Cossiga.

Members of the two small parties — the Christian Democratic Centre (CCD) and the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) — decided Tuesday to join Mr. Cossiga's formation, known as the Democratic Union for the Republic (UDR).

"Cossiga dismantles the (freedom) alliance" was the headline in Wednesday's edition of *L'Unità*, newspaper of the former Communist Democratic Party of the left (PDS).

The cracks in ex-Premier Silvio Berlusconi's freedom alliance were sealed Wednesday when Rocco Buttiglione, head of the CDU, and Clemente Mastella, co-head of the CCD, were for the first time not invited to a meeting of alliance leaders.

"This is not revenge. We just acknowledged that they helped give birth to a new political formation and put themselves outside the freedom alliance," said Beppe Pisani, leader of parliamentarians belonging to Berlusconi's Forza Italia party in the Lower House.

Both the CCD and the CDU are spinoffs from the now defunct Christian Democrats, who disappeared in the wake of corruption scandals in the early 1990s after being the largest party in all post-World War II governing coalitions.

While nearly all members of the CDU have said they will defect to Mr. Cossiga's bloc, the CCD, which is the larger of the two small parties, is split. One of its two co-heads, Pier Ferdinando Cassini, has said he would stay with Mr. Berlusconi.

Mr. Cossiga's new formation would have 29 seats in the Chamber of Deputies (Lower House) and could help Prime Minister Romano Prodi's majority in the Lower House, where it relies on the hard-left Communist Refoundation for its majority.

Although the new formation is clearly of centre-right influence, political commentators said it could help Mr. Prodi on some issues, such as an eventual vote on whether to allow Italian bases to be used for air strikes against Iraq.

Both Communist Refoundation and the Greens Party have said they will withdraw their support for Mr. Prodi if the government decides to allow the use of bases.

Mr. Cossiga's new formation would have some 44 MPs overall, 29 Lower House deputies and 15 senators.

A former Christian Democrat who has been a life senator since he left the presidency in 1992, Mr. Cossiga has remained an outspoken and controversial force in Italian politics. He was Christian Democrat prime minister twice in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

Mr. Cossiga has often said there was a need for a home for centrists forces left adrift by political changes in the 1990s. He describes his new formation as a reformist centre group that is an alternative to the left but not part of the right.

With the defection of some of the centrists, Mr. Berlusconi's alliance has effectively been reduced to the two large parties — his Forza Italia and the hard-right national alliance — and the part of the CCD which did not defect to Mr. Cossiga.

Depending on how it voted, Mr. Cossiga's new formation could give Mr. Prodi a majority in the Lower House without having to rely on the hard-left Communist Refoundation for a majority.

The defection of some of the centrists was the latest in a series of blows to Mr. Berlusconi's opposition alliance, which took a hammering in local elections last year.

Italy's centre-right opposition hit by defections

ROME (AP) — Italy's centre-right opposition was hit by defections from its ranks on Wednesday, as some members of the Christian Democracy (DC) party defected to the ruling coalition.

Members of the DC party, the largest of the opposition, defected to the ruling coalition on Wednesday, as some members of the Christian Democracy (DC) party defected to the ruling coalition.

The defections were seen as a major blow to the opposition, which has been struggling to form a government.

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Chairman of the peace talks Former U.S. Senator George Mitchell arrives at Dublin Castle. Sinn Fein are attempting legal measures in the Irish courts to prevent being ejected from the peace talks process (Reuters photo)

Decision on Sinn Fein expulsion could be delayed — Andrews

DUBLIN (AFP) — A decision on the future of Sinn Fein in the Northern Ireland peace talks could be delayed by the party's court action to prevent its expulsion, Irish Foreign Minister David Andrews admitted Wednesday.

The Irish High Court delayed a hearing of Sinn Fein's application for an injunction aimed at blocking its expulsion from the Northern Ireland peace talks.

The Irish High Court president, Justice Frederick Morris, put the hearing off until Wednesday afternoon, saying the "application was premature as its decision has been made."

Toppled junta's forces, allies bring chaos to west Sierra Leone

FREETOWN (AFP) — Forces loyal to Sierra Leone's toppled military junta and their rebel allies have been terrorising civilians in the west of the country, witnesses arriving in the capital said Wednesday.

alliance included Port Loko, Kambia, Masiaka, Roghere Junction, Banjo Junction and Rokupr, all in an area less than 100 kilometres north of Freetown.

Tuesday, forces loyal to the ousted military regime regained control of Sierra Leone's second city, Bo, 170 kilometres east of the capital.

near Freetown, tried to disassociate himself from the military regime.

comprising the vice-president, the attorney-general and the ECOMOG commander in Sierra Leone, has been set up to act on behalf of the government elected in March 1996.

In Freetown, word spread that the RUF, which took up arms in 1991 and had formed an alliance with the nine-month junta of Lieutenant Johnny Paul Koroma, driven out of Freetown by Nigerian-led troops, had abducted the pair.

Routed forces earlier kidnapped six foreigners as they retreated from the capital, seized last week by ECOMOG intervention troops acting in the name of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and restoring democracy.

Witnesses said districts attacked by the junta

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4,000 prisoners escape from South African police custody

CAPE TOWN (AFP) — There were nearly 4,000 escapes from police custody in South Africa last year, and official police figures showed Wednesday that fewer than four in 10 of escapees were rearrested.

held in police cells for long periods, often for more than a year.

Chinese dissidents call premier a murderer, say unfit to stand

BEIJING (AFP) — A group of dissidents Wednesday launched a strongly worded attack on Chinese Premier Li Peng calling him a murderer and saying he was unfit to become chairman of the parliament at the next session.

have met bloody ends or suffered persecution because they were working for democracy and the creation of a fulfilled society.

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Faulty hull rivets may have caused Titanic tragedy — report

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Structural weakness in the wrought-iron rivets that held the Titanic together may have caused them to break, "unzipping" the hull plates when the ship struck an iceberg, the Washington Post said Wednesday.

Mr. Foecke believes that the Titanic's rivet heads snapped off each time the ship scraped against the iceberg, literally "unzipping" the hull plate seams in six places, causing the ship to flood and sink in less than three hours.

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NATO to send replacement force to Bosnia

BRUSSELS (AFP) — NATO ambassadors decided Wednesday to create a peacekeeping force for Bosnia that will replace the current one when its mandate expires in June, diplomats said.

malised Friday when the ambassadors meet representatives of non-NATO members countries in the existing 35,000-strong Stabilisation Force (SFOR) in Bosnia.

replacement force will initially comprise the same number of personnel as SFOR, but then be scaled back to some 20,000-25,000 after presidential and parliamentary elections in Bosnia in September.

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Editorial and advertising offices:
Jordan Press Foundation,
University Road, P.O. Box 6710, Amman, Jordan.
Telephones: 5684311, 5699634, 5667171, 5603585
Facsimile: 5696183
E-mail: jotimes@go.com.jo
Web Sites: http://accessme.com/JordanTimes/

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When aim's unclear...

AMERICAN LEADERS, from the president down, continue to beat the drums of war against Iraq even when the U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan believes that these could be a basis for resolving the standoff over the inspection of Saddam Hussein's presidential palaces. Mr. Annan is due to arrive in Baghdad tomorrow having held several rounds of talks with the permanent members of the U.N. Security Council and ultimately received their blessing for his trip to Iraq.

Chief U.N. weapons inspector Richard Butler has now admitted that the differences between the two sides have narrowed down considerably and the resolution of these differences could be within sight. The only issue that remains, Butler told Cable News Network Monday, "is whether there can be about eight palaces that will be inspected in a special way." He went on to add that that "doesn't mean an ineffective inspection, but a special way that shows sensitivity towards Iraqi feelings and if a solution on that basis is agreeable to the (Security) Council, maybe we've got a diplomatic solution."

Despite these words from Butler and the ongoing efforts of the U.N. secretary general to defuse the crisis, the U.S. persists in justifying the need for a military solution. Ironically what the Clinton administration officials have in mind is not so much extending support to Mr. Annan but winning approval for a strike from the U.S. Congress. If this is not evidence that the showdown is essentially between Washington and Baghdad and not between Iraq and the U.N., we do not know what is.

Seeking backing from the Congress and a limited number of nations rather than from the international community as represented by the Security Council strikes us as indeed strange.

Does Washington really benefit from giving the crisis a bilateral profile? A satisfactory answer may be difficult to find. But then the stated objective of the U.S. in launching a strike against Iraqi target is not convincing either. Why would anyone want to care about the details?

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Ra'i's Fahed Fanek addressed U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan's mission to Baghdad, which starts Friday, and on the current split among the Security Council members. While the U.S. and Britain are in the mood to attack Iraq, the other permanent members of the council are calling for a diplomatic solution, which means that the council is not providing Mr. Annan with a formula to end the crisis peacefully, said Dr. Fanek. Citing a mission to Baghdad by then U.N. Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar before the 1991 Gulf war, the writer said that at the time Mr. de Cuellar carried an ultimatum to Baghdad demanding that it comply with the resolutions or face a strike. History could repeat itself if Mr. Annan would carry a stick without a carrot to the Iraqi regime, stressed the writer who added that if the secretary general's mission is the last chance for a diplomatic settlement to the crisis, the U.N. Security Council members should try to make it succeed and offer a carrot with the stick, for instance, promising Iraq a gradual lifting of the sanctions after all the sensitive sites in Iraq have been searched by the U.N. inspectors.

Al Arab Al Yawm's Mohammad Subeishi accused Turkey of plotting to occupy northern Iraq after the U.S. begins its aggression on the Arab country. Turkey does not conceal its ambitions in the oil-rich region and can find an excuse for fighting the Kurdish rebels through their occupation of northern Iraq, said the writer. Being an ally of the U.S. and Israel, Turkey could find it easy to occupy Mosul and Kirkuk, the oil rich regions of Iraq, under the pretext of needing a buffer zone to fend off Kurdish incursions into Turkish territory, Mr. Subeishi added. He said that by occupying northern Iraq, Turkey will consolidate its hold over the Kurds, surround its Syrian foe from all sides and help execute the U.S.-Israeli alliance's bid to partition and weaken Iraq and thus make it unable to pose a threat to Israel. The writer said unless the Arab countries move fast and prevent a military strike they will end up lamenting the loss of yet another and important part of their nation.

View from Academia

A close intellectual encounter of the 'right' kind

Dr. Ahmad Y. Majdoubeh

AS THE whole Middle East region awaits in anticipation (and some fear) the outcome of the present U.S.-Iraqi confrontation over the implementation of U.N. Security Council resolutions in Iraq, which some see (rightly or wrongly) as yet another unfortunate, unhealthy encounter between East and West in a long series of unfortunate, unhealthy encounters (and not just as a specific quarrel over a specific matter), an encounter of a different kind, the kind we humans of today's civilised globe rejoice at and applaud, is taking place next week.

The visit to Jordan by a Finnish cultural delegation (a seemingly humble, tiny event, compared to the former) is hoped to be of some significant consequence not only as far as Jordanian-Finnish cultural relations are concerned but also (ultimately) as far as dialogue, understanding, exchange of ideas and positive collaboration (not confrontation) between East and West (and perhaps even North and South) are concerned. At the immediate level, the cultural happening may not yield results that compare in magnitude with that which a military encounter between the U.S.-led forces and Iraq may yield, but in the long-run it is cultural encounters such as these that contribute immensely to the elimination of misconceptions among the diverse peoples of the world, the bridging of gaps among its cultures, the promotion of understanding, and the welfare of humanity.

The Finnish delegation — composed of 17 academics, intellectuals, and artists, all members of The Finnish Institute in The Middle East (FIME), an organisation consisting of scholars from several Finnish universities — will be visiting Jordan from the 21st of this month through the 27th. While in Jordan, delegation members will hold meetings with their Jordanian counterparts (offi-

cial, academics and students) in the realms of culture, literature, art and academia. There will be important lectures (about the translatability of the Koran, Arabic-Islamic art, the reception of Arabic literature in Finland, etc.) delivered at major Jordanian universities and an important book exhibit. Among other noted Finnish academics, the delegation brings to Jordan Professor Jaakko Hameen-Anttila, who translated the Koran into Finnish ably, and Heikki Palva, professor of Arabic language and literature at Helsinki University.

Finnish sincere interest in Jordanian, Arab and Islamic culture is reflected in the delegation's visit itself (as well as the number of which the delegation is composed), in the translation of the Koran, in the teaching of Arabic language and literature at Finland's universities and higher institutes of learning, and in the establishment of the Finnish Middle East Institute (FIME).

According to the institute's brochure, FIME was founded in Helsinki in 1994 by "various Finnish agencies, including the Finnish Cultural Foundation, three state universities (the University of Helsinki, the Abo Akademi University and the University of Joensuu), three churches (Lutheran, Orthodox, and Roman Catholic), several other organisations and private individuals." The aim of the institute is to "support and promote research and teaching in the fields of Near Eastern languages and cultures, multicultural and multiethnic education, archaeology, the Bible and the Christian churches, and Judaism and Islam." One of its main objectives also is "to assist further in postgraduate studies and research in Near Eastern institutions."

The delegation's visit is an opportunity for us in this part of the world (academics, intellectual, writers, artists,

and culture officials) to know more about Finnish literature and culture. Many of us know very little about Finland.

This important, elegant country — whose population is equal to that of Jordan, though its area is larger — has much to offer, not only through its varied landscape, options, industries, economic achievement, etc. but also through its literature, art, and culture. At a time when we in Jordan and the Arab World are intent upon learning from other peoples' experiences in the various realms and fields an exposure and openness to what Finland has to offer appears to be a must, not only because Finland itself appears to be intent on opening bridges and promoting relations with us but also because, though somewhat remote and different, this country bears many striking similarities to ours in attitudes, aspirations, aims and experience.

At a time when our men (and women) of letters are reading avidly and translating diligently all sorts of novels, short stories, poems, etc. from world literature, an exposure to Finnish literature will certainly enrich our literary experience. Finnish literature is rich. Among many other texts, "Kalevala," an excellent folk epic written in verse by Elias Lönnrot (on the basis of folk poetry transmitted orally for centuries) in the early part of the 19th century, and "The Egyptian," a novel written by Mika Waltari in 1979, appear to be a must. Both texts have been translated into many languages including English.

It is hoped that while the delegation is here agreements will be signed to enable Jordanian academics and intellectuals to visit Finland, learn more about its culture, and further promote the dialogue with it.

'Faced with another tragedy in the making'

By Sharif Hassan Ben Zaid Hussein

IN THE current escalating crisis, it would be unfortunate to forget the only true victims, the Iraqi people. Although the most likely major victims of military aggression on their country, barely a mention is made of them. It is they who would bear most of the punishing military strikes and the following consequences. And the most responsible culprit would be Saddam Hussein.

It could be said that President Saddam Hussein benefited the Iraqi people during his reign, but for the past eight years his errors outweigh those benefits. Looking back at what his people have endured in the last eight years, it is indigestible that some still feel he is a great leader and worthy of their support. Leadership means guiding the Iraqi people through their plight and easing their suffering, not furthering their hardship. Unfortunately, this is the picture that is unfolding and could continue to unfold with horrifying consequences. There is no one who could justify putting himself, and more importantly his people, in such a grave danger.

My great grandfather, King Abdullah of Jordan, wrote that there was a golden rule in evaluating policy and in taking decisions. The first is to "know thyself," for this is

paramount in evaluating your capabilities and provisions. The second is to "know the enemy," — failure to do that can spell catastrophe. Unfortunately for the Iraqi people, Saddam Hussein has failed on both accounts, committing serious miscalculations during the Gulf war like brushing off warnings that he could be defeated by the coalition. In fact on most occasions he paralysed his people and supporters with false and unrealistic promises, such as victory against the world. Unfortunately for him, the ensuing war yielded quite the opposite result. And to say that Iraq alone was affected economically would be false, since the whole region has yet to recover to this day.

At present we in the region are faced with another comparable tragedy in the making. The United Nations is considering another military strike against Iraq for its leadership's refusal to allow U.N. arms inspectors to go unhindered. A new time has come upon us, but it could be a sense of déjà-vu for the Iraqi people and the whole region. The Gulf war is only eight years removed, but still lingers in our thoughts as if it was yesterday. The Iraqi people, still not recovered from the previous crisis, once again ready themselves for a new one. Although the fine print might be different, the outlook remains the same. Iraq is at odds

with U.N. over there weapons inspection team and has refused them access to presidential sites, stating that they are sovereign sites and important to Iraq's security. Nevertheless, it is an accord that was agreed upon by the Iraqi leadership at the conclusion of the Gulf war. I do not believe that the presidential palaces are as important to the sovereignty of Iraq as facing the consequences of another mammoth military strike! That would not make any sense and would not justify the leadership's position.

As to the United Nations and its actions in this crisis, it has bewildered me as how it could contemplate the use of force. It is as if the U.N. has been overshadowed by the United States in its policy towards Iraq. The U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan has barely uttered a word till the past few days. If this is truly a U.N. crisis and the need for military action is required, it should be Mr. Annan doing the travelling to drum up support for the use of military action, and not the U.S. Secretary of Defence William Cohen. This has drastically hurt the image of the U.N. — it is becoming all too clear that it is not a U.N. crisis but a U.S. one. Mr. Annan must travel to Baghdad and explore all options, especially diplomatic efforts, since that is the mandate of the United Nations. Also, the lifting of the sanctions should be close at hand for Iraq and its peo-

ple, as long as they overcome this major burden peacefully. The people of Iraq must be spared from this ongoing enigma.

For the sake of the people of Iraq, and indeed the people of the whole region, war must be averted at all cost. We still hear of complaints about the region's economic situation since the Gulf war and of the miserable consequences that have followed. Indeed another eruption of strife will set the whole region backwards for an even longer period. It is my strong belief that the Iraqi president should demonstrate some leadership and work to resolve this problem diplomatically, sparing his people and the region a supplementary war. It is my view that President Saddam Hussein let the U.N. inspectors back on the job so as not to delay the removal of sanctions. If he would stand down from this conflict, Iraq will grow in the eyes of the world. This will ensure that in the event of another altercation with the U.N., Iraq will enjoy the benefit of the doubt. Already, most of the coalition that was against Iraq during the Gulf crisis, has sought to resolve this crisis diplomatically, although all stand united in agreeing that Iraq must allow the UNSCOM to go about its duty without hindrance. Only time will tell if Iraq's leadership understands the gravity of the situation and will decide to lead with the Iraqi people in mind.

An Arab obituary

To the editor:

THE ISSUE of Arab consolidation and collective action has been exhausted, so I will not attempt to tread on worn out grounds. But with the resurgence of the Iraqi-U.S. conflict, it is imperative that a few questions and comments be put forward to assess the viability of Arab clout in world affairs. First, is the U.S. policy of aggression and belligerence towards Iraq justified?

The common mantra of Arab leaders (as fed to them by U.S. dictum) that Iraq should comply with the U.N. resolutions is naive, to say the least. If war is to be waged on any party violating U.N. resolutions, then Israel should have been the first country to be attacked — and justifiably with more fervour than is expressed towards Iraq. If it is Iraq's black record of invading a "friendly" country that poses it as a threat to the region, Israel should long have been deemed the demon of the Middle East for continuing to occupy stolen land (Palestine, the Golan Heights and South Lebanon).

Second, how viable is the U.S. argument that as a dictator and an aggressor, Saddam should be annihilated?

It is highly doubtful that there exists a true democratic leader in the region. Granted, democracy may be comparatively measured in varying degrees, but let us not forget that less than a decade ago, absolute dictatorship prevailed in our region, with no exceptions. It is highly unlikely that it is in the U.S. interest to replace Saddam Hussein with a democratic leader who will not justify the U.S. military presence in the Middle East. Moreover, it is important to remember that whereas "petrodollars" once made this region prosperous, the U.S. has succeeded in intercepting this symbiotic relationship by inducing the element of instability to turn petrodollar returns into "arms-dollars." In doing so, the U.S. has now kept the upper hand by controlling a deficit-ridden Gulf region — caused by the outflow of "arms-dollars" that are seen to be necessary for equipping the region against potential aggressors. The U.S. has also benefited from "arms-dollars" domestically by keeping "arms" industries running and unemployment levels at a minimum.

On a different note, Saddam Hussein's policies of aggression towards his own people (with the Kurds in mind) is equalled elsewhere (Turkey, former Yugoslavia, as well as other Arab countries that I shall not name for purposes of political sensitivity). It is bewildering how these "friendly" nations remained intact and free from continuous U.S. antagonism.

Third, what can possibly justify the numbness of the Arab leaders and their people? With the end of the cold war, only one politico-economic power remains. It may be argued that the threat of an oil embargo by the oil-rich Arab countries can no longer be used as leverage against U.S. obstinacy. However, this does not justify thumb-twiddling policies that have been adopted by Arab governments. It is not enough to verbally denounce military action against Iraq; the role of the Arab League should be revived to bring about collective action. But most importantly, Arab leaders must first be convinced that the current Iraq-U.S. conflict is not an isolated incident; it is an issue that undermines the sovereignty of an

LETTERS

Arab country and the sanctity of its people.

The bottom line is this: Iraq is the beacon of Arab culture and civilisation. The Iraqi people have always been known for their dignity and prowess. It is our duty and responsibility as Arabs to stand together in the face of a potentially devastating force. If the real issue is the figure of Saddam Hussein, let the people of Iraq decide their fates and settle their internal affairs themselves. In the name of humanity, we should concert our efforts to avoid the carnage of innocent people who are already suffering beyond imagination. If we fail to stand in the face of the biggest violators of human rights, we will have failed the test of true humanity. Then it will be time to place the final tombstone on the Arab Nation.

Niveen Abboushi
Amman

Lurching back

To the editor:

MR. WALEED M. SADI (Jordan Times, Feb. 16, "The folly of aggression") is puzzled about why the U.S. is so aggressive and violent about Iraq and why it is deliberately bypassing the U.N.? Shouldn't the new international order be based on legality and the use of international organisations? America's actions seemingly do not make sense in the present context.

That is because the United States has simply ignored the end of the 20th century realities. It has lurching back in time to the period of imperialism and gunboat diplomacy. Only now are its imperial adventures much, much more damaging. And Britain, its Anglo-Saxon partner, is tagging along as America's errand boy and powder-monkey, perhaps dreaming of past glories of imperial domination in the Arab World. For this U.S. "new" imperialism (although it is hardly new), the United Nations is now the chief impediment to unrestrained military adventurism and attempts at intimidation and domination. That is why the Americans are deliberately bypassing and undermining the U.N. If the Americans succeed, the U.N. will be tossed into the same decline and impotence as was the League of Nations. And for those who are historically-minded, the U.S. repudiated the League of Nations also.

The rest of the world (including the former Russian imperial power) is slowly moving forward towards a peaceful, less militarised world. It is forging multi-polar links and ways of cooperating and working together peacefully. The U.S. suddenly dreaming of unopposed world domination, has fallen back two centuries in its thinking and acting. Now it feels that the time was ripe to impose a unipolar and hegemonic "Pax Americana." Another flash of the old "manifest destiny" fever. No, nothing new about it. Nothing legal about it either. Just old-fashioned crude, brute force. As they bragged in the old imperial days: "Might makes right!"

Dr. Hendrik S. Weiler
Amman

Reconciliation prerequisites

To the editor:

I WRITE in reference Rami Khouri's article (Jordan Times, Jan. 27, 1998) "Visiting the Holocaust Museum and beyond" and L. Dearing's letter to the editor of Feb. 10, 1998.

The statement that the Palestinians have to acknowledge the suffering of the Jews during the Holocaust, and the Israelis have to acknowledge the suffering of the Palestinians during the Nakbeh, if there is ever going to be true reconciliation and a genuine peace, sounds as if we are dealing here with a simple tit-for-a-tat situation. Nothing can be further from the truth.

While the Palestinians had absolutely nothing to do with the suffering of the Jews during the Holocaust, not even indirectly, they have nothing to apologise for. The Israelis, on the other hand, had and still have everything to do with the suffering of the Palestinian people, having directly caused the Palestinian Nakbeh in the past and still occupying their land to this very day.

Not only that. While until today, the Israelis are still claiming and receiving reparations for their suffering during the Holocaust 50 years ago, the Palestinians, on the contrary, have and still are forced to pay all sorts of taxes and levies to the Israelis. This means that they are actually financing the Israeli occupation of their own land.

In short, the difference between the Palestinians recognising Jewish suffering and the Israelis recognising the suffering of the Palestinians is this: The Palestinians' acknowledgement of the pain of the Jews requires from the former to show understanding and sympathy for the latter. The Israeli acknowledgement of the suffering of the Palestinians, on the other hand, entails much, much more than that. First of all, it requires an immediate end to all violations of the human rights of the Palestinian people, something that is still going on, and something that the international community has been calling for in vain. Secondly, it requires that the Israeli people try to find it in themselves to not only admit to the Deir Yassin and the Goldsteins of the past and the present, but also to apologise to those they have wronged and to repair at least some of the damage they have inflicted. Just in the same way they demand such a thing of others, in the case of their own past suffering. Only by thus recognising the humanity of the Palestinian people can a serious healing process begin, restoring some kind of balance and justice in an otherwise impossibly imbalanced and unjust situation.

Unfortunately the Israelis measure their own suffering and the suffering they have inflicted on others with two different yardsticks. As long as they deny another people, whose neighbours they have become by force, the same rights that they claim for themselves as human beings and as a people, the path leading to true reconciliation, healing and a genuine peace, will remain obstructed with more unnecessary suffering.

Nadia Abdul Hadi Sukhtian
Amman

Society on the move

People continue to go about their business, despite tense mood

When Saadeddin Juma'a was named minister for prime ministry affairs last spring, he continued to carry out the duties of his earlier post — that of secretary general of the prime ministry. Last week, prior to the cabinet reshuffle, Mr. Juma'a's smaller hat was officially handed over to Eid Qatarnieh. Mr. Qatarnieh, an interior ministry career official, has served as governor of Mu'an, Karak, Bihja and Zarqa.

GOVERNING: Appointments in the banking sector made the news with a Royal Decree approving the promotion of Ahmad Hassan Mustafa to deputy governor of the Central Bank of Jordan. Dr. Mustafa, a graduate of economics from the University of Texas at Austin, replaces Walid Khairallah who recently retired as one of the two deputy governors of the CBI. The appointment tenure is five years. Dr. Mustafa, who has been with the bank most of his career, was most recently head of its research department.

HOME TO RIO: Brazilian Ambassador Fernando Silva Alves is returning home after 5 years of service in Jordan. Mr. Alves, who said he will miss Jordan after so many years spent here, is not yet certain where the new chapter of his career will take him. But he and his wife Suely will be happy to be back in their home in Rio de Janeiro. As to a successor, Mr. Alves said none has yet been named. The couple will leave Amman in about a month.

HACKS IN WAITING: As we have seen several times before, journalists from across the globe have swamped down on Amman for coverage of an Iraqi crisis. For the past week the Iraqi embassy has been swamped with visa requests from print, radio and television media towns seeking entry into Iraq as the threat of a military strike by the U.S. and its allies intensifies. On Wednesday nearly 50 journalists were camped out at various hotels in Amman still hoping to get to Baghdad.

LISTEN UP: In Amman for only 24 hours to test-launch the first live fm broadcast of Radio Monte Carlo outside of France was the radio's Director General Christian Charpy. Mr. Charpy arrived Tuesday night and spent nearly all of Wednesday meeting with various officials and heads of media organisations. Radio Monte Carlo hosted a lunch Wednesday attended by Mr. Charpy, the chief editors of the local newspapers and Radio Monte Carlo Amman Correspondent Randa Habib. The test on fm went smoothly, and fm listeners, as of Saturday, will be able to tune in to 97.4 for 24 hours of Radio Monte Carlo's regularly broadcast programmes. The quality of reception will be much improved. The agreement to start up the fm frequency is part of a French cultural exchange protocol with Jordan. On Wednesday evening French Amb-

sador to Jordan Bernard Babelot hosted a dinner in Mr. Charpy's honour. Mr. Babelot's guest list was made up of top media principals. Medium wave broadcasts of Radio Monte Carlo will continue on 1233. Broadcast times remain the same: from 6:30 a.m. to 10:30 p.m.

WHAT WAS SAID IN PRIVATE: Perhaps not such an opportune time, but a 30-member delegation from the American Jewish Committee was also in Amman to get a picture of where things stand with respect to the Arab-Israeli conflict and the stalled peace process, and of course Jordan's position three years after signing the peace treaty with Israel. The delegation was headed by Yossi Alter, director of the Israel office of the AJC, the oldest organised American Jewish group. In total 120 AJC members are in the Middle East. They split up into smaller groups, each going to a different part of the region for similar purposes: one went to Egypt, another to the Palestinian Authority areas, and one to Turkey. The group visiting Jordan met with His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan for two hours. In private, a good number of them were highly critical of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's policies — but don't hold your breath for a public statement by the AJC to that effect. The group also met with PNA President Yasser Arafat and PNA Minister of Planning Nabil Shaath. This party that was in Jordan split up on Tuesday to get in some sightseeing before their departure.

REMARKABLE TRIO: Three young Jordanian artists who participated in an international exhibition of children's art in the Czech Republic were awarded honourable diplomas for their drawings last Thursday. The jury of the 25th Lidice exhibition selected the works of Roshna George (15), Soudaia Noman (15), and Lital Sabhi Soliman (10) among entries from 60 countries. The exhibition is held annually to honour the memory of the young victims in the destruction of the Czech town of Lidice during World War II. It is open to young artists between the ages of five and 15.

There has been a regular participation of Jordanian students in the last few years of the exhibition that brings together art works by European, African, Asian and American children, including those of Egypt, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco and Saudi Arabia. The diplomas of Lidice '97

were presented to the Jordanian students by the Czech Ambassador to Jordan Tomas Smetanka last week at the embassy. The next Lidice '98 exhibition, devoted to the International Year of the Ocean, will open in June in the Czech Republic. Paintings, graphic, sculptures and photographs related to the main topic (e.g. Water, the Basis of Life, The Sea and its Life Forms, The Rivers and Lakes of My Country, Water Sports) as well as to the permanent theme of the exhibition (Life of the World's Children) received before April 1, 1998 will be welcome. The Czech Embassy cooperates in collecting the entries from Jordanian schools with the Jordanian Ministry of Education.

SURFING FOR SUKI: A new site on the World Wide Web, originating right here in Jordan, is www.sukitherapy.com. The site describes a "natural healing therapy" called suki, which traces its beginnings to an ancient practice of Korean Buddhist monks. According to the website information, the suki practitioner stimulates the body's internal environment by applying deep and gentle pressure to the skin thus activating the "body's built-in healing mechanisms and removing blocked energy flow which causes pain and discomfort." This form of natural or alternative health care does not claim to compete with traditional medical practices. The website literature describes what suki therapy aims to treat. Here in Jordan, Dr. In Sook Chung, a sprightly 70-year-old master of suki, has opened the Chung Suki Centre where several patients are said to be finding relief from various pains and discomforts stemming from the nervous system. The website offers information on the history of suki, how it works, work related hazards and of course how to contact the Chung Suki Centre, for those interested.

Dr. In Sook Chung
Jennifer Hamarneh

Money, money, money
By Jean-Claude Elias

chip talk

THE VETERAN Arab statesman Nazim Al Qudsi, who has died aged 91, was one of the most distinguished survivors of Syria's parliamentary democracy, which flourished briefly after World War II before it was swept away by the violent intervention of the army in politics.

As independent Syria's first ambassador to the United States, Qudsi was the last living signatory of the United Nations Charter of 1945. He was also the last president of his country in 1961-63 before a secret military committee, which included Hafiz Al Assad, seized power in the name of the Baath Party in March 1963 and drove him into exile.

Qudsi was the most important political leader to emerge from Aleppo, the major city of northern Syria, which, for generations, had sat astride the trade route from Europe and Anatolia to Mesopotamia, Iran and India. Aleppo had prospered within the unity of the Ottoman Empire, but had suffered after World War I when the region was carved up by Britain and

France into separate states and spheres of influence. Aleppo merchants, for whom Baghdad and points east were natural outlets and trading partners, deeply resented the suffocating, newly created political and trade barriers between Syria and Iraq. It was Qudsi's enduring ambition to abolish these barriers by bringing about a "fertile crescent" union of Syria and Iraq. This was one of the principal aims of the People's Party he helped form in 1948, which largely represented

business and landed interests in Aleppo and northern Syria, and which he led for much of his political career.

Iraq, however, was then ruled by a Hashemite king under British protection — a monarchial and foreign connections, which were anathema to Damascus republicans, to emerging radical forces such as the Baath Party, and to ambitious army officers. This was also a time when Syria, the geopolitical heart of Arab Asia, was the object of a tug-of-war

between Iraq, on the one hand, and Egypt and Saudi Arabia, on the other.

So Qudsi faced formidable opposition and never fulfilled his ambition. He was jailed in 1949 by Colonel Husni Zaim, Syria's first military putschist (who leaned towards Egypt), released and reinstated by his successor (who lurched towards Iraq), became prime minister for one day on December 24, 1949, then served again as prime minister from June 1950 to March 1951 under a third army regime — that of Colonel Adib Al Shishakli — before landing in jail once again for seeking to limit the army's growing ambitions.

The overthrow of Shishakli in 1954, and the free elections of that year, ushered in four years of more or less democratic government — Syria's last — during which Qudsi served as parliamentary speaker. But this phase was brought to a dramatic end when the army and its Baathist allies stampeded Syria into a shot-gun union with Nasser's Egypt in 1968.

When yet another coup,

in 1961, broke Syria free from the ill-fated union, fresh elections brought Qudsi's People's Party to prominence once again, and he was elected president, serving for 18 turbulent months before Assad and his fellow conspirators, mostly from rural and minority backgrounds, seized power in 1963.

Qudsi had a mild, scholarly, bespectacled appearance. He was an honourable, old-guard politician — a man of personal integrity, democratic instinct and internationalist outlook. But, at a time of social and political turmoil in the Middle East, he was up against revolutionary forces more powerful than the class and regional interests he represented.

He spent his years of exile in Lebanon, the south of France and latterly Jordan, the friend and respected counsellor of Arab kings and princes. He is survived by six sons.

Nazim Al Qudsi, Syrian statesman, born February 14, 1906, died February 6, 1998.

Patrick Seale
The Guardian

Annans says mission to Baghdad has reasonable chance of success

Crown Prince Hassan: Jordan, U.K. support Annan's trip to Iraq

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Business & Finance

Abu Dhabi to supply gas to Dubai following Iranian offer

ABU DHABI (AFP) — The Gulf emirate of Abu Dhabi said Wednesday it had agreed to supply natural gas to neighbouring Dubai through a pipeline that could undercut another offer from Iran.

The two Gulf sheikhdoms, the biggest members of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), signed an agreement in Dubai following years of negotiations.

The gas will be supplied by the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC), which controls the emirate's huge energy sector.

ADNOC's director general, Yusuf Omar Yusuf, signed the agreement with Sheikh Ahmed Ben Saeed Al-Maktoum, director of Dubai's oil supplies department, the official news agency WAM reported.

The statement gave no details of the deal, which has been under negotiation between the two wealthy emirates for more than three years.

Industry sources said most of the natural gas would be supplied in Dubai from the Abu Al-Bukhas field, which is partially operated by Total of France.

ADNOC has already invested nearly \$800 million to develop Abu Al-Bukhas and another offshore field, Umm Al-Shail.

Press reports in the UAE have said Abu Dhabi would supply nearly 800 million cubic feet (24 million cubic metres) of natural gas to Dubai through a pipeline that will travel around 120 kilometres (75 miles) to Jebel Ali free zone, some 40 kilometres (25 miles) south of Dubai city.

"I have no accurate information about this deal but I am sure it includes better prices to undercut the Iranian offer," an industry source said. "But Dubai could still get Iranian gas to diversify supply sources."

Total, which is developing the giant Iranian Sirri field, has proposed selling Dubai around 100 million cubic feet (three million cubic metres) of natural gas per day through an underwater pipeline.

Another offer included building a \$2-billion gasline from nearby Oman to Dubai and another pipeline from Qatar as part of the planned Gulf gas distribution network that will originate from the main north Qatari North Field, the biggest single gas reservoir in the world.

Dubai, where energy consumption is growing fast due to industrial expansion, produces around 300,000 barrels per day of oil but it has no gas.

It currently gets its gas supplies from neighbouring Sharjah but its resources are not sufficient to meet Dubai's future needs.

Abu Dhabi sits atop 92 billion barrels of oil and nearly 100 trillion cubic feet (57 trillion cubic metres) of gas, the third biggest in the world after the resources of Russia and Iran.

Hong Kong's first budget under China will renew its strength — chief

HONG KONG (AFP) — Hong Kong's first budget under Chinese sovereignty will provide relief to people and businesses hurt by fallout from the Asian financial crisis, chief executive Tung Chee Hwa said Wednesday.

Tung said tax reductions contained in the budget were "aimed at giving relief to varying extents to members of the public and business as well as renewing Hong Kong's strengths."

"I believe the first budget of the HKSAR (Hong Kong Special Administrative Region) will give relief to the public and lay a solid foundation for the development of our economy," he said in a statement.

"I believe they will receive support from all sectors," Tung said.

"In the coming year, we will continue to make huge investments in infrastructure development, education and other areas to put in place the programmes announced in my Policy address last year," he said.

"These programmes will sharpen Hong Kong's competitiveness and sustain our economic growth," said Tung.

In his annual budget report, Financial Secretary Tsang said corporate tax rate would be cut by half a percentage point to retain Hong Kong's competitiveness within the region.

He said the general rate of profit tax would be cut from 16.5 per cent to 16 per cent.

While Hong Kong's tax rates are already relatively low, Tsang told legislators "there is no room for complacency. Our competitors are introducing a wide range of incentives."

Salaries tax remains unchanged at 15 per cent, although Tsang announced an eight per cent rise in personal allowances.

Saudis see weak oil prices in 1998 — experts

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Saudi Arabia expects oil prices to be weak this year following OPEC's agreement to increase its production ceiling and a resumption of Iraqi crude supplies, experts said Tuesday.

The world's dominant oil power projected its crude price to range between \$14.5 and \$15 when it released its 1998 budget.

The level is lower than the price of more than \$16 forecast in the previous two years.

The Gulf Kingdom's oil revenues were estimated at around 134 billion Saudi riyals (\$85 billion) in 1998, around 14.9 per cent lower than the earnings in 1997, according to Henry Azzam, chief economist and assistant manager of the Saudi National Commercial Bank.

"Based on these earnings, the price of the Saudi crude will be between \$14 and \$14.5," Mr. Azzam wrote in the United Arab Emirates daily Al-Khaleej.

"These projections are conservative as Saudi Arabia will produce more oil this year under a new OPEC output quota of 8.6 million barrels per day (bpd)."

Saudi Arabia, which controls more than a quarter of the world's oil wealth, pushed for a higher output ceiling for the 11-nation Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) at its conference in Jakarta in November.

The agreement was one of the main factors that depressed the price of OPEC's basket of seven crudes to around \$15, nearly \$4 below its October level and \$9 lower than prices in January last year.

"There is no doubt Saudi planners took into consideration the new production ceiling by OPEC and the resumption of Iraqi oil supplies," said Ihsan Abu Huleika, a prominent Saudi economist.

"But this is good because assuming the minimum price level will guard against price fluctuations and other unexpected developments in the market."

Oil provides more than two thirds of Saudi Arabia's total income, with the rest coming from the export of petrochemicals and light non-oil products.

Experts annulled the current weakening in crude prices to the 10 per cent hike in OPEC's production ceiling to 27.5 million bpd, excess supplies by some cartel members, the return of sanctions-hit Iraq to the market, a mild winter in the northern hemisphere and an increase in Western oil inventories.

Azzam predicted oil prices in average around \$15.8 in 1998 compared with \$18.6 in 1997 and \$20.2 in 1996.

With such a price exceeding the Saudi expectations, a projected deficit of 18 billion riyals (\$4.8 billion) could be slashed by the end of the year.

But Azzam said it could widen if Riyadh overshoots expenditure levels as it did in previous years to face growing defence and development needs.

"The Saudi government has been used to exceeding spending levels over the past years. If it exceeds the level again this year and oil prices remained at their present levels, then the actual deficit will be higher," he said.

Tempted by a surge in crude prices in 1996 and 1997, the kingdom surpassed forecast spending by more than \$10 billion.

The increase kept the deficit in the budget although it was slashed because of a surge in crude and petrochemical export earnings.

Experts said the hike in expenditure during those two years was prompted by additional allocations to health and education, growing defence spending and payment of arrears to local farmers and contractors.

More allocations were also given to development of manpower to support a drive to gradually lessen reliance on foreign workers.

The 1998 budget did not include figures on defence expenditure but Azzam said allocations for projects, information and defence and security totalled \$3.9 billion riyals (\$2.3 billion), around 5.4 per cent higher than the 1997 allocations for those sectors.

Business climate in West Germany clouds — IFO

MUNICH, Germany (AFP) — The business climate in West Germany deteriorated in January, the IFO forecasting institute reported Wednesday.

An index of confidence published by IFO on the basis of interviews with business managers declined to 99.3 points in January from 99.6 points in December.

The decline was in line with forecasts by analysts who had expected sentiment to weaken owing to the financial crisis in South East Asia.

But in the east of the country the confidence index rose to 104.3 points from 103.6 points.

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Major Currencies & Cross Rates									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NLG	FRF
US Dollar	-	1.9188	0.0093	1.4680	128.16	1.4380	1794.00	2.0014	6.1010
DE Mark	0.5495	-	0.3344	0.8069	09.26	0.7899	980.44	1.1271	3.3019
GB Sterling	1.6413	2.9880	-	2.4098	207.21	2.3602	2946.65	3.3694	10.0217
CH Franc	0.0812	123.86	0.4143	-	85.90	0.9788	1220.82	139.62	4.1482
JP Yen	0.0079	1.4428	0.4827	1.1640	-	1.1401	14.22	162.58	4.8371
CA Dollar	0.0954	1.2581	0.4220	1.0123	1.14	-	1241.24	1.4181	4.2164
IT Lira	0.0006	1.0142	0.3392	0.8018	1424.50	0.8013	-	11.43	3.3996
NL Guilder	0.4875	98.70	0.2967	71.67	61.43	0.7008	874.27	-	2.9732
FR Franc	0.1639	0.2982	0.0998	24.0570	20.64	0.2265	33.01	33.8100	-

Middle Eastern Currencies									
Currency	USD	JOD	SAR	BAH	QAT	KUW	AED	LBP	EGP
US Dollar	-	0.7090	3.7507	3.6408	0.3055	3.0729	1029.00	3.4000	-
Jordan Dinar	1.4104	-	5.2901	0.5317	0.1361	0.4309	5.1804	2156.56	4.7955
Saudi Riyal	0.2666	0.1899	-	0.1005	0.97	0.0816	0.38	407.68	0.9606
Bahrain Dinar	2.85	1.8800	9.5488	-	9.86	0.9103	8.74	4056.70	3.0180
Qatar Dinar	0.2747	0.1947	1.0302	1.0302	-	0.0839	1.01	419.96	0.8339
Kuwait Dinar	3.2733	2.3208	12.2773	1.2340	11.82	-	12.02	6094.91	0.9339
Emirate Dinar	0.2723	0.1930	1.0212	1.0212	0.9913	0.0832	-	410.29	0.8267
Lebanese L1000	0.05	0.4637	2.4530	0.2466	2.3812	0.1998	2.4022	-	2.2237
Egyptian	0.2941	0.2085	1.1031	0.1109	1.0708	0.0899	1.0803	449.71	-

Energy					Mid-East Currencies				
Oil	Last	Previous	Oil	Last	Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	JPY
Brent	13.27	13.55	SA Riyal	0.2666	0.2000	0.4854	0.18242	0.39171	33.6281
WT Texas	15.53	15.60	AE Dirham	0.2723	0.49568	0.10588	0.40002	34.3407	-
Bonny	13.27	13.55	KW Dinar	3.2733	0.95948	1.99402	4.81	412.882	-
Dubai	12.15	12.63	BH Dinar	0.3770	4.82859	1.81603	3.89712	334.58	-
UL Gas	159.00	160.00	CY Pound	1.8711	3.4056	1.1385	2.748	235.984	-

Metal Prices				Currency Deposit Rates (Bid)				
Metal	Bid	Offer	Period	-1-	-3-	-6-	-9-	-1-
Gold (oz's)	298.1	298.6	Cncy	Month	Months	Months	Months	Year
Silver (oz's)	8.74	8.78	USD	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50
Platinum (oz's)	377.5	378.5	GBP	7.44	7.31	7.31	7.25	7.44
AL (3 Months)	1480	1469	JPY	0.46	1.03	1.03	0.57	0.52
CU (3 Months)	1673	1670	DEM	3.74	3.43	3.31	3.65	3.85
Zinc (3 Months)	1050	1050	FRF	3.72	4.07	3.50	3.69	3.67
Lead (3 Months)	523	526	CHF	0.70	0.90	1.00	1.06	1.09
NI (3 Months)	5450	5470	ITL	6.07	0.94	0.58	0.22	6.05

Energy			JOD Cross Rates		
Commodity	Last	Delivery	Currency	Buy	Sell
Coffee (c/lbs)	169.0	Spot	US Dollar	0.708	0.710
Cocoa (c/lbs)	1590	Spot	GB Sterling	1.1021	1.1079
Sugar (c/lbs)	280.8	Spot	DE Mark	0.387	0.3889
Wheat (c/lbs)	0	Spot	CH Franc	0.4788	0.4822
Soya (c/lbs)	25.90	Spot	FR Franc	0.1105	0.1161
Tea (c/lbs)	188	Spot	JP Yen	0.0684	0.0822
Barley (c/lbs)	0	Spot	NL Guilder	0.3454	0.3451
Rice (c/lbs)	420	Spot	IT Lira	0.3927	0.3947

JORDAN FINANCIAL MARKET										
HOUSING BANK CENTER AMMAN - JORDANIAN										
TELEPHONE: 501171 / 501175										
ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR WEDNESDAY 18/02/1998										
PAST 12 MONTHS HIGH	COMPANY'S NAME	P / E	DIV.	NO. OF TRANS.	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED JO	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHANGE	
340,000	290,000	ARAB BANK	15.2	1.21	22	922	303500	327.00	330.00	3.00
2,340	1,660	JOR. NATIONAL BK.	4.4	0.00	11	2000	3468	1.74	1.74	-
3,540	1,370	BANK OF JORDAN	8.0	0.00	5	2752	2433	1.39	1.39	-
2,400	1,800	INDUSTRIAL DEV. BK.	10.2	6.14	16	56800	96548	1.59	1.70	0.10
5,100	4,810	THE HOUSING BK.	29.3	1.58	2	400	1470	4.95	4.90	-0.05
920	620	JOR. GULF BANK	4.2	9.86	10	13800	9914	7.13	7.10	-0.03
4,020	1,890	JOR. ISLAMIC BANK	10.9	4.49	43	16553	35194	7.11	7.14	0.03
1,600	800	BEIT AL-HAL (BEITNA)	8	18.52	5	400	487	80	80	-0.01
BANK SECTOR TOTALS (INDEX: 230.85) (CHG: +0.56)										
2,210	1,590	JOR. FRENCH INSUR.	9.9	7.14	4	10700	22470	2.10	2.10	-
2,300	1,200	HOLY LAND INSUR.	6.4	0.00	2	6092	7615	1.25	1.25	-
INSURANCE SECTOR TOTALS (INDEX: 120.87) (CHG: 0.00)										
2,050	1,550	JOR. ELECTRIC PWR.	9.6	5.03	25	13565	26860	2.01	1.99	-0.02
4,030	1,320	IRBIO ELECTRICITY	14.1	4.85	1	103	237	2.50	2.37	-0.13
1,550	930	NATL. PORTFOLIO	0	0.00	6	1350	1359	1.00	1.00	-
6,900	6,700	ALRA' I	15.8	5.63	1	1000	8800	6.50	6.60	0.10
1,090	500	KARLA EDUCATION	2	0.00	2	1000	930	93	93	-
2,070	1,630	UNIFIED CO.	8.1	6.47	7	4500	7650	1.68	1.70	0.02
810	600	UNION LAND DEV.	9	0.00	6	2000	1320	0.03	0.03	-
SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS (INDEX: 116.54) (CHG: +0.31)										
4,450	2,450	JOR. CEMENT FACT.	18.2	4.07	5	9900	26860	2.69	2.70	0.01
7,050	5,620	ARAB POTASH CO.	14.2	3.27	1	4222	24570	5.90	5.85	-0.05
11,160	9,200	JOR. PETRO. REFINERY	9.9	8.71	23	14077	14070	10.20	10.20	-
1,410	1,040	WOOLLEN INDUSTRIES	8.9	8.93	2	330	370	1.16	1.12	-0.04
7,350	5,800	JOR. WOOLSTED HILLS	10.4	3.10	3	1300	6385	6.69	6.45	-0.20
4,680	3,400	ARAB PHARM. MARK.	23.0	4.24	42	10036	47949	4.81	4.72	-0.09
1,620	1,020	JOR. PIPES MANFACT.	15.9	8.25	1	100	128	1.28	1.28	-
1,420	780	ADAMA' INDUSTRIES	9	0.00	2	350	273	78	78	-
4,000	4,000	ALADWA DV. INV.	14.1	4.33	1	100	577	5.77	5.77	-
1,670	1,000	LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	5.5	0.00	30	39950	18160	45	45	-
1,150	1,680	ADAMA' PAPER CON. TRD.	22.6	0.00	6	24500	20621	7.78	7.74	-0.04
1,080	370	NATL. INDUST.	9	0.00	8	950	54	54	56	-0.02
810	580	INTERMED. PETRO. CHEM.	9	0.00	8	10950	4599	43	42	-0.01
810	500	JOR. ROCEMOUL IND.	9	0.00	1	250	130	54	52	-0.02
5,500	5,500	JOR. WOOD IND. JACO	29.9	1.82	1	1500	8250	5.50	5.50	-
3,000	920	NAT. CABLE WIRE. MPAC	25.3	0.00	4	2168	2296	1.04	1.05	0.01
790	530	JOR. SULPHO-CHEN.	9	0.00	4	2750	998	57	57	-
1,570	1,150	ARAB PHARM. CHEM.	15.8	5.65	10	6750	8459	1.25	1.24	-0.01
1,800	800	UNIV. MOD. INDS.	2	2.25	83	77000	66633	85	85	-
1,410	690	JOR. INDS. RESOURCES	16.0	13.51	10	8500	6275	74	74	-
1,620	1,350	NATL. CHLORINE	13.7	4.83	2	120	145	1.45	1.45	-
930	810	JOR. NEW CABLE CO.	16.5	0.00	12	3936	3548	90	90	-
1,680	1,290	EL -ZAY READY WEAR	46.5	0.00	4	2350	16302	1.32	1.32	-
1,250	1,080	INTL. TOBACCO	6.3	0.00	6	6750	7898	1.17	1.17	-
810	660	JORDAN STEEL	33.2	0.00	24	25533	25762	6.88	6.88	-0.01
840	570	NIG. EAST COMPLEX	7.6	16.13	6	20550	6437	6.67	6.67	-0.01
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS (INDEX: 109.50) (CHG: -0.44)										
GRAND TOTAL (INDEX: 165.37) (CHG: +0.20)										
PARALLEL MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR WEDNESDAY 18/02/1998										
490	300	CENTRAL GEN. STORAGE	7	0.00	1	7002	600	31	30	-0.01
570	340	JOR. TRADE FAC.	10.1	0.00	6	6250	2315	37	38	0.01
600	340	NATL. COMMER. CENTERS	8	0.00	2	12220	6720	54	51	-0.03
800	660	UNION INV. 507	9	0.00	26	112599	23644	70	71	0.01
820	360	ARAB PTY. INVEST.	6	24	24500	2	1168	78	76	-0.02
N 1,000	720	AL-SHARQ INV. CO.	9	0.00	1	1600	1468	92	93	0.01
PS 16,000	29,000	JOR. TOURIST TRANS. CO.	3	2.62	1	100	105	1.00	1.05	0.05
1,780	1,780	AL-DAMRIAN 75	31.7	0.00	3	2193	843	88	88	-0.01
N 1,000	850	ARAB JOR. INVEST. CO.	9	0.00	1	35323	350000	1.00	1.00	-
290	140	JOR. INDS. MATCH-JEMCO	9	0.00	2	200	32	15	16	0.01
840	310	ARAB FOOD IND.	9	0.00	3	1200	1200	100	100	-
570	370	NATL. TEXTILE	9	0.00	3	750	210	30	28	-0.02
750	360	NATL. MULT. GEN. MANICO	9	0.00	3	1600	21622	1.38	1.38	-
N 1,230	890	READY H23 COMBUSTE	13.2	1.00	1	100	11366	1.07	1.07	-0.01
1,500	860	UNION TOBACCO 75	9	0.00	2	3150	1607	67	67	-
570	370	RACI PHARM.	9	0.00	1	100	363	36	36	-
460	240	WINGS. ENG.	9	0.00	3	1203	364	26	26	-0.01
630	520	IND. CEMENT	13.6	0.00	2	1000	572	53	52	-0.01
N 1,000	800	ADVANCED PHARMA. IND.	9	0.00	5	2200	13477	2.68	2.68	-0.01
N 820	490	NATL. POULTRY	9	0.00	5	1060	1060	52	51	-0.01
N 950	480	OPTICAL MEASURING 75	9	0.00	4	11000	2800	49	48	-0.01
N 1,000	800	NAT. ALUMINUM 75	94.6	0.00	2	1000	1290	77	77	-0.01
N 1,100	1,000	NUTRIDAR	9	0.00	10	2650	2632	1.05	1.05	-0.02

Henman suffers 4th straight first-round defeat; Arazi out

ANTWERP (AFP) — Greg Rusedski put his big serve to work as he outlasted Morocco's Hicham Arazi 7-6 (7/4), 3-6, 6-3 Wednesday to emerge as Britain's only survivor in the \$1 million European Community Championship.

The fifth seed stormed back in the third set at the Sportpaleis, starting with a love game, saving a break point and finally advancing into the second round.

Swede Magnus Norman earlier handed Tim Henman his fourth consecutive opening-round loss, posting a 7-5, 6-3 win.

The upset of the eighth seed by the world No. 24 will send Henman's computer ranking down to around 25th from its current 17th.

"I'll still be a top 25 player," Henman said. "I don't have any points to defend for three months (due to injury in 1997)."

"Of course it's disappointing, but I know that I'm good enough to work hard on the practice court and it will sooner or later pay off on the match court."

Henman is one of the headliners at next week's Barmsea tournament in London.

The loss to Norman followed first-round defeats the Briton suffered at the Australian Open, Split and last week in Dubai, when he went out to Boris Becker.

Henman had won his only other match with Norman last autumn in Basle and was a finalist here last year against Swiss player Marc Rosset.

The Briton said he had a good chance when he came back from 2-5 down in the first set against Norman, who plays despite a congenital heart valve problem.

"I was back on level terms, but I could not take my opportunities," he said. "He was able to come up with a big serve or a cheap point whenever he got in a spot of bother."

Rusedski saved a third-set break point against Arazi, 37th in the world, with a serve winner, then finished the third game with an ace for 2-1.

One break of serve saw Canadian-born Rusedski advance into a contest against France's Guillaume Raoux. He served 18 aces to three by Arazi but the match was close all the way.



Greg Rusedski



Hicham Arazi

Egypt's Hassan leads goal race

OUAGADOUGOU (AFP) — Egyptian striker Hossam Hassan was the most successful marksman during the first round of the African Nations Cup in Burkina Faso with five goals.

Hot on his heels with four each are Joel Tiehi, a survivor from the Ivory Coast team that won the biennial competition in 1992, and promising South African Benni McCarthy.

A further goal behind are Souleymane Oulare of Guinea and Alphonse Tchami, one of 20 foreign-based stars in the Cameroon squad and the only player to score in each match.

Hassan, 31, from leading Cairo club Al-Ahly may be entering the twilight of an illustrious career, but his predatory instincts ensured the Pharaohs finished second in Group D ahead of more fancied Zambia.

The shaven-haired Egyptian scored a hat-trick against the 1996 bronze medalists, starting with a casually struck free kick into the corner and ending with a close-range shot.

McCarthy, 20, plucked from the obscurity of Cape Town lower division football by former European club champions Ajax of Holland less than one year ago, has experienced a topsy-turvy tournament.

Lucky not to be sent off after striking an Angolan and dropped against Ivory Coast, McCarthy struck four goals past Namibia within 20 minutes of the kick-off.

Laurent Pokou of the Ivory Coast set the individual scoring record 28 years ago with five against Ethiopia in a 6-1 victory that has not been matched.

After equalling the goal haul of leading 1996 scorer Kalusha Bwalya from Zambia, Hassan can adjust his sights to eclipsing the nine struck by Ndayo Mulamba of the then Zaire 24 years ago.

Tiehi grabbed the fastest first-round goal by giving the Elephants a second-minute lead against Namibia and Togolese substitute Mohamed Toure claimed the latest with a 92nd-minute winner over Ghana.

African Nations Cup Dramatic victory gives Morocco top spot

OUAGADOUGOU (AFP) — Mustapha Hadji scored in the final minute to give Morocco a 1-0 victory over Egypt in a top-of-the-table African Nations Cup Group D clash here on Tuesday.

The ponytailed midfielder from Spanish club Deportivo la Coruna struck with a spectacular bicycle kick that left Egyptian goalkeeper Nader al-Sayed helpless.

Success gave Morocco a total of seven points, first place in the 'Group of Death' and a quarter-finals showdown with defending champions South Africa here on Sunday.

Egypt, who played with 10 men throughout the second half after Medhat Hady was sent off just before the break, came second with six points and tackle Ivory Coast on Saturday.

The line-up is completed by matches between Cameroon and the Democratic Republic of Congo (formerly Zaire) on

Friday and hosts Burkina Faso and 1996 silver medalists Tunisia on Saturday.

Morocco, who beat and drew with Egypt in the qualifying competition for Burkina '98, did most of the pressing on another hot afternoon in the Burkinabe capital.

Captain Nouredine Naybet wasted the best first-half chance when he fired tamely at Al-Sayed after Abderrahim Ouakili had rounded the goalkeeper and played the ball back.

Lahcen Abrami and Hadji came close in the second half at the Municipal Stadium before Egypt had their biggest let off when Taher Al-Khalef beaded against the upright following a corner.

With a goalless draw seemingly inevitable, a cross from the right eluded two Egyptian defenders and Hadji, facing away from the goal, connected acrobatically with the ball to earn Morocco three points.

Mexico, Japan leap in FIFA world rankings

ZURICH (AFP) — Mexico have jumped to an all-time high of fourth and Japan have leapt to ninth in the latest FIFA rankings list issued Wednesday.

Mexico moved from fifth to fourth on the back of their victory in the CONCACAF Gold Cup — gaining the highest ranking for a team from the CONCACAF region. Chile moved up nine places to seventh after their recent win over England, while Yugoslavia moved from 20th to eighth and Japan surged from 14th to ninth to become the first Asian side to gain a top 10 ranking.

The United States, up 14 spots to 12th place, and South Korea, up seven places to 20th, have also made impressive progress ahead of this year's World Cup in France.

Rankings (end of 1997 rankings in brackets):

1 Brazil (1)	72.58 points
2 Germany (2)	65.01
3 Czech Republic (3)	64.54
4 Mexico (5)	61.67
5 England (4)	60.89
6 France (6)	59.45
7 Chile (16)	59.14
8 Yugoslavia (20)	58.97
9 Japan (14)	58.90
10 Norway (13)	58.87
11 Romania (7)	58.84
12 United States (26)	58.63
13 Morocco (15)	58.61
14 Italy (9)	58.40
15 Colombia (10)	58.05
16 Croatia (19)	56.64
17 Argentina (17)	56.26
18 Zambia (21)	55.95
19 Tunisia (23)	55.94
20 South Korea (27)	55.70
Selected	
21 Sweden (18)	55.62
24 Denmark (8)	55.29
35 Australia (35)	52.32
36 South Africa (31)	52.28

Owen favourite to finish as leading scorer

LONDON (AFP) — Liverpool's teenage sensation Michael Owen has been installed by bookmakers as favourite to finish the season as the English Premiership's top goalscorer.

After kicking off the campaign as a 100-1 outsider Owen took his league tally to 12 after his hat-trick at Sheffield Wednesday at the weekend earned for Roy Evans' title-chasers a vital point from a 3-3 draw.

He is now rated at 9-4 chance. The 18-year-old who last week became the youngest player to be capped for England this century when he played in the 2-0 defeat by Chile, still trails Blackburn duo Kevin Gallacher and Chris Sutton by one goal.

But Owen is growing in confidence by the game, with Ladbrokes spokesman Sean Boyce admitting: "We've been mightily impressed with his form of late. It's hard to believe that back in autumn we were offering odds of 100-1 on Owen being top goalscorer in the league."

Wihdat, a community club that has come a long way, looks forward to continued achievements

By Omar Karmi
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — There can be few teams in the world who can boast a domestic treble. Wihdat, being Premiership champions, Jordan Cup winners, Cup Winners Cup titlists and only missing out on the Federation Shield, is one of them.

Their latest title was their fourth in as many years, and, ominously for the teams struggling to keep up with them, they have gone on record as saying that they fully believe they will make it ten, taking them way past the year 2000.

Moreover, ambitions at Al Wihdat were this year not confined to Jordan. They went to the Arab Champions Cup in Algeria full of expectations, and although they suffered a humiliating 7-0 defeat to the Algerian champions, and were eventually knocked, this tourna-

ment is the next logical step for a club as rich in young talent as in confidence.

The debacle in Algeria, and the subsequent departure of their Iraqi trainer Anwar Jassam, provided further proof of the team's domestic supremacy.

Failing to find an immediate replacement, the team played without a trainer for the remaining ten matches of the season, losing once and drawing once, but still managed to clinch the title and win the cup.

The reason most often cited for the club's success is its massive and fanatic following. Jordan Football Association (JFA) statistics show, according to club officials, that Wihdat brings in as much revenue to the JFA from attendance as all the other Premiership clubs combined.

The importance of the fans is

something club officials acknowledge, but are keen to play down. "We are the best team in the country," one said simply.

Instead, officials prefer to focus on other factors. The club is based in the Wihdat refugee camp, and is intrinsically woven into the social fabric of the camp and its 100,000 residents.

Whereas clubs have scouts to find promising youth players, Wihdat doesn't need them. Most of the trainers at the club are also teachers at the camp schools, and as such know the camp youth. It is easy for them to contact and interest a youth which doesn't really have much else to do once school is finished.

This link between the camp's schools and the club, is vital in throwing up a team year after year with new names and of championship quality.

The club has also invested in for-

ign trainers and have to date employed all their foreign trainers from Iraq. This year, looking for a replacement, they have gone as far afield as Russia, but budgetary restraints do not allow them to hire from such exotic places. The short-list for next season's trainer is down to two Iraqis: Adel Youssef and Yahya Elwan.

The club was established in 1956 by the United Nations Relief Works Agency (UNRWA) as the Wihdat camp's youth centre, and also functioned as a school and a centre for food aid.

In those days, the camps' youth centres did not take part in Jordanian competitions, and therefore held their own competitions which also encompassed West Bank clubs. From ten championships, Wihdat won nine.

The football club entered the Jordanian League in 1968. In 1975

they gained promotion to the 1st division only to be immediately relegated, but in 1977 they were up again, never to look back.

They took their first Jordanian championship in 1980. It took seven years for them to add another championship to their first, and then until '91 to add a third. However in the 1994 season they came out with a startlingly confident announcement, saying that they fully expected to win the championship for the next ten years. They have so far, under the present manager, Abed Afana, made good on their promise.

Today, as well as a sports club — with a very successful volleyball team (eight times champions), a newly formed basketball team (still second division) and a chess club — the club also runs an orphanage with about 80 children, a library, a fund for helping other refugee

camps in Jordan and plays an active role in helping the local community in times of hardship: in winter-time many, because of inadequate housing, are forced to the club to seek shelter, and the members are sent out to provide assistance such as snow-clearing, sealing leaks and bringing basic food stuffs to the needy. In this way it is unique, not just in Jordan but in the world. It is truly a community club.

The club's roots in the community extend to the roots. In 1994 Wihdat went on a tour of the West Bank and Gaza as the first and only Jordanian team to have played there. The tour was a great success, watched in Gaza by Palestinian President Yasser Arafat, and took the players to Hebron, Jericho, Nablus and Jerusalem. Another tour is planned for April of this year.

TODAY AT	CINEMA TEL: 634144	CINEMA TEL: 634144	CINEMA TEL: 5699238	CINEMA TEL: 5677420	CINEMA TEL: 079 33430	CINEMA TEL: 079 33430	Elisha Yanes Theater TEL: 625155
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	Pierce Brosnan as James Bond 007...TOMORROW NEVER DIES Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	Sherry Long ... in THE BRADY BUNCH Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	Martin Lawrence ... in NOTHING TO LOSE Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, 10:30, 8:30 GEORGE OF THE JUNGLE 5:00 p.m. only	CONCORD "1" Adel Imam & Yusra ... in RISALA ILA AL WALI (ARABIC) Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:00, 8:15, 10:30 CONCORD "2" MR. BEAN Shows: 3:30, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30	ABDOUN I KNOW WHAT YOU DID LAST SUMMER Shows: 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30 MORNING SHOWS 101 DALMATIANS	ABDOUN Brad Pitt...in SEVEN YEARS IN TIBET Shows: 3:30, 6:00, 8:15, 10:45	NOW ON DAILY THE GOVERNMENT IN THE SERVICE OF PEOPLE Starring Hisham Yanes and Amal Dabbas For reservations call: 640155, 625155

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n the Burkina capital
Nouredine Naybet wanted
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e after Abderrahim Ouakali
goalkeeper and played the

Owen
favourite
to finish
as leading
scorer

LONDON (AFP) — Liverpool's teenage sensation Michael Owen has been installed by bookmakers as favourite to finish the season as English Premier League goalscorer.
After kicking off his campaign as a 16-year-old, Owen took the league tally to 12 after his trick at Sheffield Wednesday at the weekend earned for Roy Evans's chasers a vital point.
He is now rated a 50-50 chance. The 18-year-old who last week became the youngest player to be capped for England in a century when he played the 2-0 defeat by Chelsea still trails Blackburn's Kevin Gallacher and Chris Sutton by one goal.
But Owen is growing confidence by the game with Liverpool's captain Sean Boyce adding: "We've been much impressed with his form. It's hard to believe that back in autumn we were offering odds of 10-1 on Owen being the goalscorer in the league."

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Americans Nikki Stone and Eric Bergoust shows their gold medals during a victory ceremony in Nagano February 18. The two won their medals in the Olympic freestyle skiing aerials competition (Reuters photo)

SCOREBOARD

NBA

Miami	110	Minnesota	84
Philadelphia	98	Cleveland	97
San Antonio	95	Detroit	94
Chicago	105	Indiana	97
Phoenix	95	Dallas	77
New York	91	Denver	77
Portland	101	Golden State	83
Sacramento	102	Boston	99

French Cup Quarter-final
Marseille 2 Auxerre 3

German Cup semi-final
B. Munich 3 VfB Stuttgart 0
Bayern play either Duisburg or Eintracht Trier in May 16 final

African Nations Cup Group D
Zambia 3 Mozambique 1
Morocco 1 Egypt 0

European Community Championship
Greg Rusedski (GBR x5) bt Hicham Arazi (Mor) 7-6 (7/4), 3-0, 6-3
Magnus Norman (SWE) bt Tim Henman (GBR x8) 7-5, 6-3
Petr Korda (CZE x1) bt Wayne Ferreira (RSA) 6-3, 6-3
Cedric Pioline (FRA) bt Magnus Gustafsson (SWE) 6-4, 7-6 (8/6)
Karel Kucera (SVK x7) bt Jolán Van Herck (BEL) 6-7 (3/7), 6-4, 6-2

Memphis ATP Tour
Wayne Black (Zim) bt Emilio Alvarez (Spa) 5-7, 6-3, 7-5
Grant Stafford (RSA) bt Alberto Martin (Spa) 6-3, 6-0
Thomas Nydahl (SWE) bt Nicolas Lapentti (Ecu) 6-3, 7-6 (7/5)
Jordi Burillo (Spa) bt Jonathan Stark (USA) 6-7 (6/8), 6-3, 6-2
Daniel Nestor (Can) bt Marcello Craca (Ger) 6-4, 4-6, 6-3
Paul Haarhuis (Ned) bt Luke Jensen (USA) 6-7 (6/8), 6-4, 6-4
2nd rd
Marcelo Rios (Chi x1) bt Steve Campbell (USA) 6-2, 6-4
Gustavo Kuerten (Bra x3) bt Glenn Weiner (USA) 7-6 (7/5), 6-3
Jan-Michael Gambill (USA) bt Byron Black (Zim x14) 5-7, 7-5, 7-6 (9/7)
Vince Spadea (USA) bt Javier Sanchez (Spa x16) 7-6 (7/1), 6-4

Hanover WTA event (2nd rnd)
Steffi Graf (Ger x2) bt Andrea Glass (Ger) 6-4, 6-2
Anke Huber (Ger) bt Elena Likhovtseva (Rus) 6-7 (5/7), 6-2, 6-4
Andrea Glass (Ger) bt Barbara Paulus (Aut) 2-6, 6-3, 6-0
Lisa Raymond (USA) bt Alexandra Fusu (Fra) 7-6 (7/5), 6-2
Sabine Appelmans (Bel) bt Irina Spirlea (Rom x5) 4-1, 6-0

Steffi Graf (Ger x2) bt Andrea Glass (Ger) 6-4, 6-2

Anke Huber (Ger) bt Elena Likhovtseva (Rus) 6-7 (5/7), 6-2, 6-4

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Nagano Winter Olympics Daehlie gets historic medal; U.S. hockey out

NAGANO (AP) — Bjorn Daehlie did what no one had done before Wednesday — win a record seventh gold at the Winter Games. The NHL-laden U.S. hockey team did what few expected — crash out of the Olympics at the earliest opportunity.

Alberto Tomba, seeking his fourth medal in as many Olympics, did what has become an all too familiar pastime on the Olympic slopes — sit out another day and wait till the snow settles.

Daehlie got Norway back into the hunt for the four-man relay Wednesday and was witness to the closest finish in cross-country before he could start celebrating his Olympic milestone.

After 40 kilometres on the snow harp course in Hakuba, his teammate and sometimes-rival Thomas Alvsgaard thrust his right ski across the finish line two-tenths of a second ahead of Italy's Silvio Fauner, setting off a Norse celebration.

Daehlie's victory went along with the gold he won in the 10-kilometre race last week. He also won three titles at the 1992 Albertville Games and two golds in Lillehammer.

Cross-country skier Lyubov Yegorova, who competed for the unified team and Russia, and Soviet speedskater Lyilia Skhlikova had topped the all-time Winter Olympics medal chart with six going into the Nagano Games.

"I was not thinking about it so much, but it means some-



Russia's Alexei Yashin (19) tries to score a goal against goalkeeper Andrei Mezin (1) and Oleg Rumyantsev (18) of Belarus during the Olympic men's hockey quarterfinal at Aqua Wing stadium February 18. Russia beat Belarus 4-1 to advance to the semifinals (Reuters photo)

thing to me," Daehlie said of his record. "I will appreciate it in a few years when I look back on a fantastic career."

It was doubtful if any of the U.S. millionaires from the North American National Hockey League would want to think back to Nagano after Wednesday's embarrassing 4-1 quarterfinal loss to the Czech Republic.

"I hate to be negative," U.S. hockey star Keith Tkachuk said. "but this is disgusting."

After Daehlie reached his

"I'm sure I'm going to be apologising for a long time," said Mike Mistano, the only U.S. player able to score in 30 shots on Czech goaltending genius Dominik Hasek. With a 1-3 record, the Americans were humiliated by their weak showing in Nagano.

The United States, however, tasted glory in the freestyle aerials with Eric Bergoust and Nikki Stone jumping, twisting and turning towards double gold.

After Daehlie reached his

record. Ole Einar Bjoerdalen and teammate Frode Andresen added more shine to Norway's day with a 1-2 finish in the 10-kilometre biathlon.

The three medals pushed Norway's total up to 19, just 3 fewer than Germany, the leader. Russia was in third place with 13, including a leading 8 gold. Unlike the U.S. team, the Russian hockey squad cruised into the semifinals with a 4-1 victory over Belarus.

Bjoerdalen's win in the

biathlon almost seemed to come as easily.

The Norwegian hit all 10 targets and stayed ahead of teammate Frode Andresen on the cross country course to capture the 10k biathlon.

"I had perfect skiing and the best shooting I've ever done," said Bjoerdalen, 24.

Perfection was also close for the U.S. aerial jumpers.

Bergoust, 28, made it three U.S. golds in freestyle skiing when he scored a world record 255.64 points. He was almost perfect on both his "quad" jumps — quadruple twisting triple flips.

Stone beat out China's Xu Nannan for the women's title. Jimmy Moseley won the men's moguls last week.

"I'm walking on sunshine," Stone said.

It was something Tomba could only dream about.

Seeking to stretch his alpine medal run to an unprecedented fourth Olympics, Italy's Tomba could only watch how over a metre of snow postponed his 1998 Olympic debut.

giant slalom, "la bomba" has best chance in the slalom, set for Saturday.

Women's figure skating was to start with the short program Wednesday, and three Americans — Michelle Kwan, Tara Lipinski and Nicole Bobek — all had good medal chances.

Challengers included Russians Maria Butyrskaya, the European champion, and Irina Slutskaya, 1995 world champion Lu Chen of China; and France's Surya Bonaly, winner of five European crowns.

Ahead of Sweden's quarterfinal clash with neighbouring Finland on Wednesday, an independent panel decided Sweden will have to do without Ulf Samuelsson for the rest of the Olympic hockey tournament.

Samuelsson became the first hockey player kicked out of the Olympics — not for banned substances but because he has U.S. and Swedish passports.

Wednesday was the sixth day during the Nagano Games in which no Alpine races were held because of the weather. The only race run as scheduled during the first 11 days was the women's combined slalom Tuesday.

Tomba, who already has three gold and two silver medals, is the only alpine skier to win medals in three straight Olympics — and he will be attempting to make that four in a row. After Thursday's rescheduled

The rugged defenseman was blindsided by Sweden's own citizenship laws. His eligibility was rescinded late Tuesday by the international ice hockey federation.

Samuelsson said he should have been provided better information about the consequences of having two passports.

"I never wanted to give up my Swedish citizenship," Samuelsson said. "I played three games in Nagano and now, when the fun really starts, I'm being sent home."



Matthias Hamann of FC Bayern Munich reaches for the ball during the German soccer cup semi final match against VfB Stuttgart. Bayern won the match 3-0 (Reuters photo)



Chicago Bulls' Michael Jordan jams in a basket in front of Indiana Pacers' Mark Jackson. The game which was being played on Jordan's 35th birthday ended 105-97 for the Bulls (Reuters photo)

Makelele recalled to French squad

PARIS (AFP) — Marseille midfielder Claude Makelele was Wednesday recalled to the French squad for a friendly international against Norway in Marseille on February 25.

Makelele, 24, is the only surprise choice in a squad of 17 announced by national coach Aime Jacquet.

He has played two internationals, the last against Sweden last April. He has been rewarded for his fine recent form as Marseille have surged up the French league table and is preferred to experienced Pierre Leigle.

"I'm certainly very happy to be back in the squad and it is a reward for all the work I've put in over the last few months," said Makelele.

"Being selected now is a great motivation with the World Cup finals so close."

Jacquet's squad includes no players from traditional powerhouse Paris St Germain, who have been struggling in recent weeks.

Lionel Letizi of Metz replaces the injured Lionel Charbonnier of Auxerre as reserve goalkeeper behind Fabien Barthez, while Chelsea centre-back Frank Lehoucq is the only English-based selection.

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GOREN BRIDGE
WITH OMAR SHARIF & TANNAN HIRSCH
IT'S A DIFFERENT GAME
North-South vulnerable - East deals
NORTH
♠ Q 9
♥ J 9 8 3
♦ A J 10 8 2
♣ 4 2
WEST
♠ A 3
♥ 10 5
♦ 8 4
♣ K Q 10 8 6 5 3
SOUTH
♠ K 6
♥ A K Q 8 7 2
♦ 9 7 5
♣ A J
The bidding:
EAST SOUTH WEST NORTH
Pass 17 Pass Pass
Opening lead: Ace of ♠
We thank Dr. Muri Horn of Stockton, Calif. for this hand, dealt at a Regional pair championship in Palm Alto. Not one declarer at four hearts made the contract. Yet a rubber bridge player could claim. Read on and decide where the fault lies.
East's three-spade opening is typical of declarer in favorable outline.

ICRC seeks to repatriate Arab prisoners in Iraq

BAGHDAD (R) — The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) said on Wednesday it was trying to arrange the repatriation of five Arab prisoners freed by Iraq under an amnesty ordered by Iraqi President Saddam Hussein.

Manuel Bessler, head of the ICRC delegation in Baghdad, said the ICRC was helping one Syrian, two Kuwaitis and two Saudi Arabian nationals freed in the last few days under the amnesty announced for Arab prisoners held in Iraq.

At least 215 Arab prisoners, including 184 Egyptians and 26 Palestinians, have been released since the amnesty was declared on Feb. 5 in an appar-

ent move to gain Arab sympathy in Iraq's standoff with the United Nations over arms inspections.

Mr. Bessler said the ICRC was helping to repatriate only those Arab prisoners whose countries had no diplomatic missions in Baghdad.

He said he expected the two Kuwaitis, jailed about a year ago for illegal entry into Iraq, have said they were on a fishing trip when their boat broke down and drifted into Iraqi waters.

Iraq held an estimated 1,200 to 1,300 Arab prisoners before the amnesty, but not all will be freed. The amnesty does not apply to those held for security offences or spying.

In some cases, such as those convicted of murder, the Iraqi authorities say they must get the approval of the victims' families before releasing them.

Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Syria, all part of the U.S.-led coalition that drove Iraqi troops from Kuwait in the 1991 Gulf war, are among Arab countries without diplomats in Baghdad.

The amnesty was announced shortly after President Hussein met Arab League Secretary General Esmat Abdul-Meguid and other foreign envoys sent to Baghdad to try to defuse the crisis.

U.K.-U.S. poll:

Majority in Britain, U.S. will support air strikes against Iraq

LONDON (AFP) — A large majority in both the United States and Britain will support air strikes against Iraq, according to a survey published here Wednesday.

The Daily Telegraph said a Gallup poll for it and CNN and USA Today in the U.S. found 76 per cent of Americans and 62 per cent of Britons will approve if U.S. and British forces launch an air attack.

Slightly less, 60 per cent of Americans and 56 per cent of Britons, would also approve a ground attack.

Fully 89 per cent of Americans and 84 per cent of Britons said they considered Iraqi President Saddam Hussein a "threat to world peace."

Nevertheless, both countries also appear to support their leaders' line of a diplomatic solution if possible. 69 per cent of Americans and 79 per cent of Britons saying they would prefer a diplomatic solution or continuation of sanctions, to the use of force.

And only 48 per cent of Americans and 33 per cent of

Britons think it is possible to destroy the weapons of mass destruction at the centre of the inspection crisis, from the air.

Both nations are united in the belief that any military action should have as its goal the removal of President Hussein from power. Fully 87 per cent in both countries think this should be an objective.

Gallup interviewed 1,014 adults across the United States between February 13 and 15 and 1,005 adults across Britain between Feb. 11 and 16.

Israel ordered to explain lack of masks for Palestinians

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israel's supreme court ordered the government on Wednesday to explain why Palestinians and children of foreign workers have not received gas masks handed out free of charge to Israelis.

The court ruling followed a complaint lodged by the Israeli group, Doctors for Human Rights, as jittery Israelis stock up on protective gear for fear of a possible Iraqi strike against their country.

It has given the government five days to justify its decision not to hand out immediately and free of

charge gas masks to Palestinians living in areas under Israeli control and children of some 300,000 foreign workers, a judicial source said.

"If settlers have gas masks because they feel in danger, why are the Palestinians not receiving them? They are also in danger," said the human rights group's lawyer Eran Lev.

Palestinians can obtain kits to protect against chemical or biological weapons for around \$55, while foreign workers can obtain masks at supermarkets on payment of a deposit.

Around two thirds of

Israelis have gas masks, which have been handed out free to them since the 1991 Gulf war, when Iraq hit Tel Aviv with Scud missiles, killing two people.

Meanwhile, the Swiss embassy said Wednesday it has started distributing gas masks and other protective equipment to its nationals living or visiting Israel.

By the end of the morning, 150 kits including gas masks, overalls and gloves had been given out from the 2,000 stocked at the embassy, said Swiss Consul Jakob Schranz.

Adoptive parents visit Vanunu in jail

TEL AVIV (AP) — Mordechai Vanunu for the first time met his adoptive parents, a Minnesota couple in their 60s, during a 20-minute jail house visit, prison officials confirmed Wednesday.

The couple, Mary and Nick Eloff, of St. Paul, Minnesota, were allowed to talk with Vanunu on Tuesday at a high-security prison in the coastal town of Ashkelon, said prison authority spokeswoman Orit Messer Harel.

The Eloffs were accompanied by two of Vanunu's brothers, she said.

The Eloffs are peace activists who adopted the 43-year-old Vanunu after exchanging letters with him for three years. They have said they were drawn to Vanunu by his courage and out of sympathy over his harsh conditions of imprisonment.

Vanunu has been held in solitary confinement for 11 years, and only recently have officials

suggested they may let him move to a regular cell.

A former nuclear technician, Vanunu was convicted of treason in 1986 for publicising photographs of Israel's secret nuclear weapons plant to the Sunday Times of London. From the pictures, experts determined that Israel had a massive nuclear weapons stockpile.

He is serving an 18-year prison term.

Parliamentary cleric condemns raising of U.S. flag in Tehran

TEHRAN (AP) — A day after Iranian wrestling fans applauded the first American sportsman in Iran in nearly two decades, a hard-line legislator on Wednesday condemned organisers for allowing the U.S. flag to be displayed.

"It is said that alleged sports fans applauded an American wrestling team," Mohammad Reza Fakher said in the majlis, or parliament.

"They plan to hoist the American flag and play their national anthem, to rub in our noses that which we used to trample underfoot only last year," Mr. Fakher said. The U.S. flag has been often burned and stopped on in Iran since the 1979 Islamic revolution.

The majlis hall was filled with chants of "Death to America" following Mr. Fakher's remarks.

At the opening of an international wrestling tournament at Tehran's Azadi Stadium Tuesday, an Iranian crowd

cheered the U.S. flag as it was carried by a U.S. wrestling team, the most prominent Americans to visit since the revolution ousted the U.S.-supported shah. It was not yet clear whether the organisers planned to raise the U.S. flag or play the national anthem if any of the Americans win their events.

The cheering acceptance of the U.S. flag at the opening ceremonies and the swift condemnation in parliament are manifestations of Iran's love-hate relationship with the United States.

Relations between Tehran and Washington have been sour since the revolution, when Muslim militants stormed the U.S. embassy in Tehran and held 52 Americans hostage for 444 days.

But President Mohammad Khatami, a moderate cleric elected in May, broke nearly two decades of ice in broadcast remarks last month calling for cultural exchanges between the

two countries. Mr. Khatami's efforts toward a détente have been under attack by powerful hard-liners like Fakher.

And U.S. President Bill Clinton responded to Mr. Khatami's remarks by repeating the American position that restoration of diplomatic relations was hampered by Iran's alleged support of international terrorism, opposition to the Mideast peace process, and development of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons.

The American wrestlers, and the Iranian organisers, have stressed the athletic rather than the diplomatic aspect of the landmark visit. But the possibility that ties might be restored between Iran and the United States has been raised by the presence of the Yankee tourists.

The American wrestlers say they have been pleasantly surprised by the warm welcome they have received in Iran by fans and organisers.



MARDI GRAS MASKERS: Order of LaSbe maskers from the 'Clowning Around' float toss trinkets to the crowd along Government St. in Mobile, Alabama, during Mardi Gras on Tuesday night (AP photo)

Clinton lawyers ask judge to drop Jones case

WASHINGTON (R) — President Bill Clinton's lawyers asked the judge in the Paula Jones sexual harassment case on Tuesday to throw out the lawsuit, arguing that there were no factual or legal grounds to pursue it.

In a motion for summary judgement filed with U.S. District Judge Susan Webber Wright in Little Rock, Arkansas, Mr. Clinton's lawyers said that in pre-trial discovery, Ms. Jones had failed to establish any basis for her complaints.

President Clinton adamantly denies that he sexually harassed Paula Jones at the Excelsior Hotel on May 8, 1991, or behaved improperly toward her in any way at any time," the 56-page motion said. It added that even if there was a sexual advance, the alleged encounter was not punishable by law because it had not been shown that Ms. Jones was denied any job benefits or exposed to a hostile workplace as a result.

One member of Mr. Clinton's legal team said the only specific complaint

made by Ms. Jones was that she failed to get flowers on Secretary's Day one year after her alleged brush with Mr. Clinton.

"If that happened, no one knows why it happened. Governor Clinton was not involved," the president's lawyer said. "There is absolutely no evidence in the record after five months of discovery that anyone got any benefits that she did not get by virtue of the activities of the governor."

Ms. Jones, a former Arkansas state employee who alleges that Mr. Clinton exposed himself to her and asked for oral sex when he was Arkansas governor, spent "99 per cent of her discovery efforts attempting to substantiate that President Clinton made sexual advances to other women," the filing said.

The filing made public pre-trial testimony given by Ms. Jones in the case, including some passages described by Mr. Clinton's legal team as "very graphic."

"He came over there, pulled his pants down, sat down and asked me to perform oral sex...." It quoted

Ms. Jones as saying.

Asked in the deposition to describe Mr. Clinton's words exactly, Ms. Jones responded, "He asked me would I kiss it, he goes — you know, I can see the look on his face right now, he asked me, 'would you kiss it for me?' I mean, it was disgusting," according to the filing.

"Nothing could demonstrate more clearly that this suit has very little to do with redressing plaintiff's purported personal injury, and everything to do with using the compulsory processes of the court in an attempt to humiliate and damage the president," it said.

It was digging by Ms. Jones' lawyers that turned up an alleged relationship between Mr. Clinton and former White House intern Monica Lewinsky. This, in turn, triggered an investigation by independent counsel Kenneth Starr that threatens to lead to an effort to drive Mr. Clinton from office.

Prosecutors are trying to find out whether Mr. Clinton had a sexual relationship with Ms. Lewinsky and whether he or other officials encouraged her to

lie about it in a sworn statement to Ms. Jones' lawyers.

Mr. Clinton has denied having such a relationship with Ms. Lewinsky or asking her to lie.

Mr. Clinton's motion for summary judgement in the Ms. Jones case was filed one month ahead of deadline — the Ms. Jones lawsuit is scheduled to go to trial in Little Rock on May 27.

"We want this case resolved and resolved quickly. We want to get it over with," Mr. Clinton attorney Robert Bennett said.

Ms. Jones' lawyers have two weeks to file arguments on why the case should not be dismissed. "We believe that we have enough evidence to corroborate that there's a pattern and practice of the president giving favours and jobs for sex," John Whitehead, who heads the non-profit legal foundation financing the Ms. Jones case, told Reuters.

"The bottom line here is that this is an attempt to avoid a trial that will embarrass the president," Mr. Whitehead said.

Pro-government factions told to disarm around Sudanese capital

KHARTOUM (AFP) — Factional fighters backing the Sudanese military government who live in the Khartoum area have been ordered to hand in their arms, press reports said Wednesday.

The order to all factions affiliated with the pro-government United Democratic Salvation Front (UDSF) reportedly came from Riek Machar, assistant president and the chairman of the South Sudan Coordination Council.

Commander Peter Bol, the deputy chief of staff of the UDSF factions, was quoted by the daily Al Usbu as saying that the move was designed to "check insecurity caused by several officers and men holding arms and residing in the capital outskirts without the knowledge of the military authorities."

He referred to "some incidents" two weeks ago involving "some officers" in Jebel Awlia, about 50 kilometres south of Khartoum.

Cndr. Bol did not elaborate on the incidents, which were not reported here, apart from saying that they "were contained in the presence of the coordination council chairman."

He said the Khartoum government "had nothing to do with" the disarmament, and that "it was the factions that have taken the decision for collecting arms." Cndr. Bol added that senior officers "are presently collecting arms from the different military factions." The six SSDF factions split from the mainstream rebel Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) led by John Garang and sided with the government.

Congress inflicting 'dynastic rule' on India — Hindu nationalists

NEW DELHI (AFP) — Hindu nationalists Wednesday accused their major rivals for power, the Congress, of trying to inflict "dynastic rule" on India by wooing Sonia Gandhi into national politics.

Nationalist leader Lal Krishna Advani said the 113-year-old Congress had probably concluded it had no future without the Nehru-Gandhi family that ruled India for around 40 years since independence in 1947.

"They are trying to inflict on the people a continuance of dynastic rule in this country," the United-News of India quoted him as saying.

Sonia Gandhi, Italian-born widow of slain former Premier Rajiv Gandhi, agreed last month to campaign for his Congress party

India extends ban on key Kashmiri separatists

NEW DELHI (AFP) — The Indian government Wednesday extended a ban on a leading Kashmiri Muslim separatist outfit by two more years ahead of national polls in the state. A communique here said the government had banned the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) until February 2000 for "continuing anti-national activities." The headline group is one of the leading Muslim rebel groups fighting for Kashmir's independence from India. More than 20,000 people have died in Kashmir since 1989 in separatist-linked violence.

during the current national elections.

Despite her lack of political experience, she has drawn huge crowds all over the country and has revived Congress morale, putting the party back in the reckoning to return to power after the February 16-March 7 polls.

India's first prime minister was Jawaharlal Nehru, who ruled from 1947 until

1964. His daughter Indira Gandhi was twice prime minister. She was assassinated in 1984 and succeeded by her son Rajiv Gandhi, who was in turn assassinated in 1991.

There is speculation that Sonia Gandhi might be asked to become the prime minister if the Congress performs well in the current elections.

Iran urges acquittal of French writer on trial for questioning Holocaust

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran asked France Wednesday to acquit the French author Roger Garaudy on trial for questioning the Nazi Holocaust against the Jews, the official news agency IRNA reported.

"The Higher Council of the Iranian Cultural Revolution asks the French government and judicial authorities to end their anti-scientific, anti-cultural and worrying behaviour and acquit Roger Garaudy," a council statement said.

tami, is Iran's highest authority for cultural affairs.

It urged the French authorities to "save France, a country considered as the birthplace of freedom of thought, from the shame of following the goals of a racist group."

The council said Mr. Garaudy was being put on trial as a result "of the influence and tendentious objectives of Zionists circles."

Mr. Garaudy, 84, is on trial in France for his book "The Founding Myths of Israeli Politics," which

prosecutors claim denies the Nazis used gas chambers to exterminate Jews during World War II. The former communist who converted to Islam could face a one-year jail term and a 300,000-French-franc (\$50,000) fine if convicted for his statements, which are illegal under a French law against neo-Nazi activities.

President Khatami and the principal Iranian leaders have already demonstrated their support to the French writer, who has visited Iran several times in the past.

Jackson planning 'We Are the World 2' concert

LOS ANGELES (AFP) — Pop singer Michael Jackson is planning an Oct. 10 fundraising concert in Seoul that's tentatively being called "We Are the World 2." The Los Angeles Times reported. Planned as a benefit for starving North Korean children, the concert at the Olympic Stadium is expected to be broadcast live in 120 countries. Several other top-name performers are also expected to perform.

Madonna repackages herself as maternal and spiritual

NEW YORK (AFP) — The sultry virgin is gone, the ambitious blonde forgotten, but not the master image manipulator. Madonna has repackaged herself as maternal and spiritual, using her baby to promote her new album, "Ray of Light," her first album since 1994, debuts world-wide except Japan on March 3 but radio play begins on Thursday. The song "Frozen" has been getting airplay since Feb. 13. The charm offensive by Madonna, born Marie Louise Ciccone 39 years ago, began a few days ago with a splash report in Vanity Fair including photos of baby Lourdes, now 16 months old.

U.S. basketball star to hawk \$300 sunglasses

CHICAGO (AFP) — Chicago Bulls superstar Michael Jordan kicks off an ad campaign next month for his new "Mars" sunglasses. Dubbed "Series 0023," the red-bued, metal-rimmed leather-rimmed spectacles will retail for \$300. In the advertisement set to appear in leading glossy magazines, Jordan will wear an Indiana Jones-style hat, a scarlet jacket and a mock turdneck to match the red colour associated with the planet Mars and the world champions Chicago Bulls basketball team. Jordan, who turned 35 on Tuesday, is said to have designed the shades with the firm Oakley. He also reportedly chose the name.

Sinatra does not have cancer

LOS ANGELES (AFP) — Singer Frank Sinatra does not have cancer, according to a message put on his family's Web site to counter media reports that he has cancer of the bladder. "As far as we, his family know, at the present time there is no cancer anywhere in Frank's body, and he is not in need of surgery of any kind," said the Web site at Sinatrafamily.com. The 82-year-old crooner left Cedars-Sinai Medical Centre on Feb. 12 after undergoing a series of medical tests.

Linda Evangelista, Bryan Adams team up to fight breast cancer

ST. CATHARINES (AFP) — Hometown supermodel Linda Evangelista and pop star Bryan Adams officially opened a breast cancer detection centre here that bears their names, news reports said. The two Canadian celebrities sponsored a gala dinner and concert that raised \$175,000 for the centre, the St. Catharines Standard said. The centre, which has been operating for four months, gives mammograms to women 50 years and older, the daily said. Evangelista and Adams decided to launch it after they met last summer at a Los Angeles recording studio. The pair sang a duet on a compact disc released to benefit breast cancer research.